

Alternative Education Research Project

**A report examining alternative educational sites and their
approaches to working with 'at risk' young people.**

December 2000

Commissioned by Eltham High School and Diamond Valley College

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December 2000, Victoria

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1. Introduction

“There is a growing concern for the apparently increasingly large numbers of young people who are for various reasons missing out on the benefits of education and possibly a better future. These are the young people, the invisible ones who are not even completing Year 10, who are becoming disconnected from education before the age of 15 or 16.....”

(Brooks, Milne, Paterson, Johansson and Hart, 1997:1)

Eltham High School and Diamond Valley College, located in the North East region of Melbourne, have recognised that some young people are becoming disconnected from school and are ‘at risk’ of leaving school early.

Eltham High School is a large school with an excess of 1200 students. The school has a welfare program, a comprehensive academic program and more recently introduced an intensive literacy program. The school still finds that there are some students who require the more intimate teacher student ratio and the modified curriculum an alternative education setting can provide. On average Eltham High School states it would have 15 students who would benefit from alternative education at any given time.

Diamond Valley College is a small school with an excess of 400 students. This school is further north in the cluster and also has comprehensive welfare and academic programs. Diamond Valley College also has students, around 6 -7, who would benefit from an alternative education system.

Both schools have expressed a desire for a more accessible alternative education setting in the cluster and were successful in obtaining School Focused Youth Service Yarra Valley Cluster funds (SFYS) to research the issue.

1.2 Research question

“Are there alternative ways of addressing the educational needs of young people who are unable to have these needs met in mainstream settings due to ‘difficult’ behaviours?”

1.3 Aim of the research

“To develop an information base which could be used to facilitate the provision of an alternative educational setting in the Northern Yarra Valley Cluster.”

1.4 Terms of reference for this study

The objectives of this research were to:

- Conduct a literature review exploring what research or investigations into the topics that have already occurred in Victoria. (It was agreed by members of the reference group to expand this to consider also Australian and international research).
- Review the current system in terms of models, management structures, staffing, and funding sources.
- Provide information regarding the management of alternative education through the Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) and other sectors.
 - Identify current evaluation approaches determining how well the current system is working.
- Identify alternative models or approaches to enhance successful outcomes.

- Provision of a final report including recommendations for further action.

1.5 Some definitions

To further define the scope of this study a number of terms and definitions require greater clarification.

- Alternative education site

The focus of this research is on those educational facilities, which serve the needs of ‘at risk’, young people in a facility located outside of a mainstream school. These alternative education sites may include annexe’s to mainstream schools, teaching units or community schools who could be either educational or vocational in their focus. Those ‘Alternative Programs’ that operate within mainstream education settings are not understudy.

- Focus on public secondary alternative education sites

This report has only considered those alternative education sites that serve secondary school aged students. Generally speaking the Commonwealth or State Governments and the non-government, community welfare sector, provide these programs. The report gives some mention to those programs operated by the private sector. However due to concerns around access to fee-paying programs, (due to the financial constraints that this creates for young people) they have not been included in the selection of case studies.

- ‘At risk’

With reference to Batten and Russell (1995), ‘at risk’ is used to describe or identify young people who have particular difficulties or disadvantages and hence are believed likely to fail to achieve the development in their adolescent years that would provide for a satisfying and fulfilling adult life. **Students ‘at risk’** make up a large subset. The risk identified for these students (and specific concern of this report) is that of leaving school early ie failure to complete secondary schooling and whose achievement at school is significantly below their potential achievement level.

- Good Practice

There is much interest in determining models of ‘good practice’ in alternative education for ‘at risk’ young people, both from the literature and from the interviews. That is programs that meet their objective for students are appropriate, effective and efficient. Good practice should be evaluated in a context of resources, target groups and program aims.

- Victorian Research location

Where possible, information that can be drawn from a Victorian context is seen to be more relevant for this study. Most examples have been taken from Victorian experience, all case studies of Alternative Education sites are located in Victoria.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research ideology or paradigm

The paradigm for research in this study is interpretive and employs qualitative research methods to explore and describe models of alternative education that are currently operating in the Victorian community.

2.2 Research design

The research undertaken begins with a literature search of relevant documents, reports, policy Internet databases and textbooks. The information obtained from the literature will provide the context in which to best understand data found in the case studies.

The research will explore 15 different alternative education sites in Victoria. These alternative education sites will be selected using a non-random stratified sampling procedure. This sampling procedure will provide a cross section of size, models and locations. The sample will therefore include representations from Community Schools, Teaching Units and other alternative sites, both vocational and educational from rural Victoria, outer, inner and urban Melbourne.

Discussions with teachers or coordinators at the alternative education sites will be in the form of semi structured interviews. Further discussions with other key informants, such as Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) personnel, the reference group, Principals, and other community providers will take place both informally and in organised meetings.

2.3 Data collection

As previously mentioned information for the study will be gathered by way of a semi structured interview. This data collection method allows for an 'open' questionnaire to be discussed by respondents inside an interview format.

The questionnaire will include the following areas of investigation; types of models, management structures, staffing, funding sources, and evaluation tools employed by alternative education sites.

Interviews will be recorded and notes taken. Where possible information will also be received from respondents in the form of brochures, annual reports, evaluation reports or any other information deemed relevant by the parties involved.

2.4 Findings and Recommendations

The 15 case studies of alternative education will be presented in a consistent format to easily understand differences and similarities with the approaches. A summary analysis will also be provided. It is envisaged that this information will provide a detailed picture of the possibilities of alternative 'off site' education arrangements.

The information gained from the literature search (the theory) and information gathered in the case studies (the practice) will inform recommendations about how 'best' to set up an

alternative education site in the North East region that will meet the needs of those young people 'at risk' of early school leaving.

2.5 Reference Group

The reference group for this research was;

Helen Rix	Assistant Principal Eltham High School
Doug Macrae	Principal Diamond Valley College
Michael Smith	Youth Planning and Development Officer, Nillumbik Shire Council
Brendan Monigatti	Student Welfare Co ordinator Eltham High School
Cheryle Michael	Job Placement, Employment and Training, Banyule Community Health Centre
Kath O'Donnell	SFYS Co ordinator, Yarra Valley Cluster, Eltham Community Health Centre

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Special thanks to the Reference Group members, Clodagh Wylie for her assistance with interviews and those practitioners from community agencies, DEET and alternative schools who were part of the consultation process.

2.6 Acknowledgements

Those site Co ordinators/Directors who were included in this study were;

Mick Butler	Heidelberg Teaching Unit
Brother Russell Peters	St Augustine's
Brother Doug Walsh	The GAP
Sandy McCrumb	Barkers Creek Annexe
Martin Phillips	'Oasis' Sunshine Annexe
Bob Shepherd	Sherbrooke Community School
Sue Molnar and Pam Hullin	Berry Street School
Alex Walker	Lynall Hall
Sam Lambraia	Coburg Teaching Unit
Denise Clarke	Baltara Integration Unit
Chris Astley	Collingwood Alternative School
Terry Cunliffe	Number One
Anne Broadribb	The Island
Lyn Scott	Sydney Road Community School
Stewart Andrews	Kensington Community High School

3. Literature Review

The literature review attempts to provide an historical and a current context for alternative education generally, and then specifically to those alternative education sites serving the needs of young people 'at risk' of early school leaving in Australia. Further it seeks to;

a) explore previous research or investigations (international, national and local) on the topic of alternative education for those 'at risk' of early school leaving.

b) understand the key issues and characteristics of early school leavers and what this means for the establishment of models for effective alternative education.

c) note the gaps, limitations or contradictions in current research and/or evaluations in this area..

3.1 Sources of information

Relevant and current information for this literature review has been sourced from reports, journal articles, newspapers, magazines, books and internet databases and found in the following places:

- Department of Education History Unit
- University of Melbourne, Education Library (including ERIC and AEI index)
- State Library Victoria
- Information Victoria
- School Focused Youth Service documentation
- Internet data bases
- Australian Council for Educational Research
- Department of Education Employment and Training, Victoria
- Melbourne University Youth Research Centre

3.2 Background

3.2.1 A history

“There is disagreement about the origins of alternative education, however everyone agrees that alternative schools were not originally established to work with ‘at risk’ young people.”
(Kellmayer, 1995:3)

During the first three-quarters of the last century it was relatively easy for the Australian community to set up their own small schools. In fact this was the only way which most communities were able to offer schooling to their children. With the coming of compulsory education, this practice became much less common. In the first half of the Twentieth Century there were occasional attempts to establish ‘progressive school’s’. During the periods between the wars the writings of A.S. Neill were influential in Australian and indeed other parts of the world, including America. In the late sixties and early seventies there was a reawakening of interest in alternative education.

“It seems clear that during the decade, new schools which could reasonably be called ‘alternative were numbered in the hundreds”.
(Middleton,1982:163)

Some of the more determined survive today,(Kensington Community School established 1972, and Sydney Road Community school, established 1972 , Preshill junior campus 1929 senior campus 1973), in one form or another, and many more continue to spring up in the Australian community.

3.2.2 What was the impetus for alternative education?

The 1970's provided a social, economic and political climate conducive to educational reform. Bambarch (1979:2) reports that:

"Social and technological changes have helped to foster attitudes which are tolerant and sometimes encouraging towards progressive ideas and experimentation in education. Public interest and concern, accentuated by the mass media, for what schooling is or is not doing had been reflected in political policies and government initiatives. There have been signs of a greater desire by parents, and to some extent students, to participate in policy making in schools. In general, teachers have also shown in the 1970's a greater readiness than in earlier decades to innovate and to experiment with new teaching/learning approaches."

At this time many alternative schools were set up by groups of parents, teachers or concerned citizens dissatisfied or disillusioned by 'mainstream' education for their children in primary and/or secondary schools.

3.2.3 So what was the vision for alternative education?

Miller (1994:28) believes that:

"It's vision is profoundly humane, person centred, democratic and attuned to the deep human quest for meaning and purpose."

Or as Mintz (1994:18) states:

"The free school (or alternative school) was conceived not as an instrument by which to flee from history but rather as a visible metaphor for many values, visions and ideals that seemed to some of us to be essential in the struggle to assure the psychological and intellectual survival of our children."

Some key characteristics of alternative schools have been summarised by Chuck Chamberlain (1994) in the following way:

- small in size
- participatory decision making
- self directed learning
- valuing creative expression
- co operative processes
- grading replaced by feedback
- valuing whole person learning
- education as process rather than product
- flexible curriculum

Or as prescribed similarly by Korn (1991):

Alternative schools are places for learning in which 'freedom' is valued. The education they work to encourage incorporates the following features:

- the students are active participants in decision making
- their parents are expected to be active participants in education
- teachers and students trust and respect one another
- creativity and curiosity are valued and encouraged

- learning how to learn is more important than specific content
- educational goals include self responsibility and independent learning
- students and or parents choose to attend the schools

Clearly there is strong overlap in the two authors' summaries. What becomes more important is what are the priorities? Who should decide them? How are these characteristics translated into reality? What is particularly pertinent for the needs of the particular group? What is made clear throughout the literature is that the ideologies of alternative schools are shaped from a mixture of theoretical ideals, the personalities of those involved and the problems they struggle to address. The actual structure of each school to the very shape of the curriculum is built on a multi faceted foundation.

As becomes increasingly clear throughout the literature these aspects of alternative schools seem to be pertinent for those programs working with 'at risk' young people today.

3.3 Today

A brief scan of alternative schools available today makes it apparent that there are many different kinds of alternatives with different philosophies, purposes and of course methods. They serve a variety of students with a variety of needs, not all of them problematic. While some exist to address problems of deficiencies (ie Specialist Schools, eg Victorian School for the Blind) others strive to open up new opportunities for their students. Alternative schools have been created for the 'gifted' and the 'not so gifted' for the 'well behaved' as well as the 'disruptive'. Some concentrate on basic scholastic skills, (like literacy and numeracy) or behavioural issues, whilst others pursue special talents and interests.

3.4 'At risk' young people

"The development and promotion of alternative education programmes have grown in recent years as a result of the search for alternative solutions to address student misbehaviour, as well as an attempt to provide environments and a curriculum that meets the needs of 'at risk' students".

(Nichols and Utesch, 1998: 272)

This study is specifically interested in those alternative secondary schools who serve the needs of those young people identified as having 'behaviour problems' in their mainstream schools. These problems may include poor attendance to chronic truancy, disruptive behaviour, expulsions or suspensions and learning issues. In most of the current literature these disaffected young people are referred to as '**at risk**'. Inside the education system they are 'at risk' of leaving school early. (Outside the education system they may be 'at risk' of homelessness, family conflict, drug abuse, mental health issues, sexual and physical abuse etc.) As well some of these young people may be under the legal school leaving age. As stated earlier in section 1) (terms of reference), this report is particularly interested in those young people 12 -16 years (grades 7-10) who are '**at risk**' of leaving school early.

3.4.1 What are the consequences of early school leaving?

Leaving school early reportedly may have negative effects for both individuals and society. According to Groth (1989: 1) who uses Catterall (1985) in 'A process model of dropping out of school.'

"Dropouts tend to have lower paying jobs, lower employment rates and generally lower standards of living. Similarly, dropping out leads to social costs in the form of increased

crime rates, increased dispensation of welfare and unemployment subsidies, increased health care costs, and lowered tax revenues for the state”.

In Australia there is considerable research evidence that indicates that there is a strong correlation between early school leaving, unemployment and homelessness. In the report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training (1996) it is indicated that people with a lower level of educational attainment are more likely to be unemployed than those with a higher level of attainment. In Australia unemployment is generally associated with poverty and dependence on income support.

3.4.2 Who are the early school leavers?

While it is not possible to define a typical early school leaver there are some common groupings that may assist in targeting programs and services. The Youth Research Centre in their report on Early School Leaving (1990: 9) identified the following categories:

- **Positive Choice** - those who leave school making a positive choice to take up their options.
- **Opportune Leavers** - leave school to find a job or to establish a personal relationship.
- **Would be Leavers** - those who would prefer to leave but are continuing for now to increase their work options.
- **Circumstantial Leavers** - forced out of school for non-educational reasons ie financial issues.
- **Discouraged leavers** - their experience of school is discouraging - they have had no success and their performance and interest in school is low.
- **Alienated leavers** - more difficult to meet their needs than the discouraged - many leave school very early.

Generally this report is concerned with those young people who make forced (eg expelled) or unforced (eg financial problems) choices not to stay at school and those who leave because they feel the support and services that have been provided are not appropriate or adequate to meet their needs (the **circumstantial leaver**, the **discouraged leaver** and the **alienated leaver**).

3.4.3 Extent of the problem

There are some discrepancies in the literature as to the ‘true’ incidence of early school leaving. In part this is due to data being collected in different ways for different groups ie early school leavers versus under age school leavers. Brooks, Milne, Patterson, Johansson and Hart (1997: 2) make this point clear,

“The number of under age school leavers is very difficult to calculate, because of the broad definitions involved and the lack of aggregated data collection. Currently there is no uniform national data, on the number of young people under the legal school leaving age who have left school, the extent of school truancy, or the number of young people excluded from school for disciplinary reasons. However rough estimates of the extent of the problem can be made using available data and findings from specific research projects”

Hayduk and Webber (1995:2) use Australian Bureau Statistics (ABS) which indicate that up to 15% of young people are leaving school 15 or younger. This is somewhat higher than Brooks et al (1997) who estimate that between 1- 4% of 12 -14 year olds are not connected to schools or other formal education services. However they estimate that in ‘high risk’ schools (15% of all secondary schools) that between 5-10% of 12-14 year olds are leaving school early.

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in their longitudinal Surveys for Australian Youth 1995(LSAY) found that around 9% of the students under study in Year 9 had left school by 1997, that is before Year 11.

Whether we agree or disagree on the number of early school leavers most would agree that this is a significant issue for young people and hence the wider Australian community.

3.4.4 Victorian statistics

The Department of Education in Victoria in its Review of Alternative/Ancillary Programs Report (1998) states that:

“Research in the United Kingdom, America and Australia has supported the premise that up to 20% of students experience difficulties at some time during their schooling. These difficulties may range from minor peer or teacher conflict to family related concerns, to work and curriculum based problems, through to problems associated with a disability or impairment” (part 6)

According to ABS figures for 1999 there were 214,631 students in government secondary schools and 132,918 in non-government secondary schools in Victoria. The retention rate for students in Victorian Schools (government and non-government) from Year 7 to Year 12 is 76.2 %. This means that the percentage of students leaving school before year 12 is about 23.8%. (Appendix 1 Victorian Retention Rates). Some may move on to bigger and brighter prospects but for many it may be the beginning of a long career of unemployment.

3.4.5 Local data

In the Shire of Nillumbik's, 'Youth Services Forward Plan (2000) they calculate that there are 13,160 young people aged 12-25 (which represents 24.2% of the Shires population of 54,417.) Young people aged 12-17 represent 11.74% (6389) of the Shires population.

3.5 Some common characteristics of early school leavers

The same report by the Youth Resource Centre (1990: 2) also provides information concerning the general characteristics of those early school leavers that will assist in targeting alternative settings to meet their needs. They are as follows:

- the majority have a government school background
- the majority have completed at least 10 years schooling (ie to year 9)
- young men constitute a higher proportion of early school leavers than young women
- young Koorie people are the most disadvantaged of all school leavers (20%)
- country school students have a higher rate of early school leaving
- low income is a predominant cause of school leaving
- residential insecurity, homelessness is a major factor in early school leaving
- chronic truancy is a clear indication of leaving school early
- **family expectations have declined as a major factor in early school leaving since the eighties**

In the more recent study by (ACER) further characteristics of early school leavers may be added to this list. In their report Early School Leaving: Findings from the 1995 Year 9

Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY) cohort, Marks and Fleming (1999) report that:

- students with low levels of school achievement (measured by performance in literacy and numeracy) are substantially likely to leave school early
- there are substantial State and Territory differences in early school leaving
- positive attitudes to school and higher aspirations about school completion decrease the likelihood of early school leaving
- over 50% of students surveyed who left school early say that the main reason they left was to find a job or an apprenticeship. A further 13 % said they left because they did not like school

3.5.1 So why do young people drop out?

Having identified the categories and general characteristics of early school leavers, we must now consider those factors that contribute to school leaving. In the literature many factors have been associated with, or causally related to early school leaving. Such risk factors rarely operate in isolation instead they tend to work in combination or sequentially. It is important to recognise that there is no great clarity about what factors are seemingly greater contributors than others. This would over simplify a complex set of risk factors.

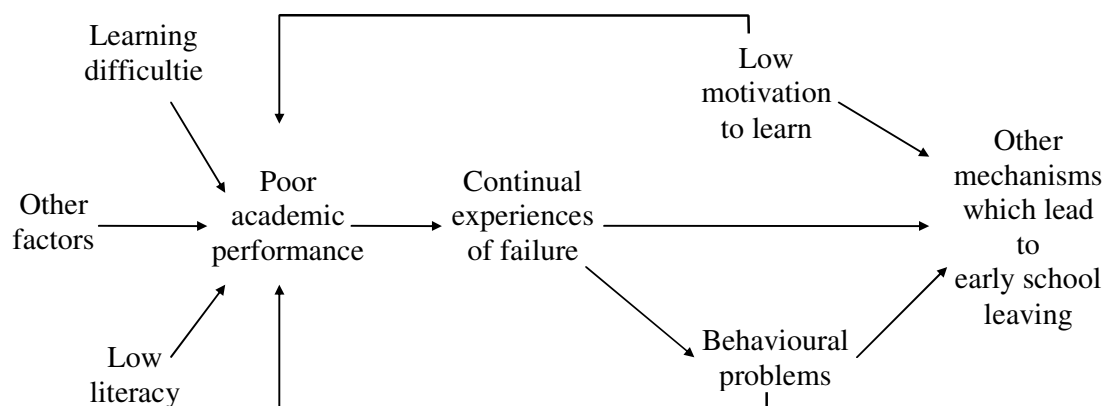
3.5.2 Low school achievement

According to research carried out by Gold and Mann (1996:151) in the U.S.A. on ‘at risk’ young people in the school system, school achievement is paramount.

“The importance of two specific components of scholastic experiences, scholastic performance as reflected by grades and relationships with teachers, are underlined by the findings. We found that the perception of flexibility of their scholastic program is pivotal to the students’ beliefs that they can succeed as students and that their teachers will give them the social supports they need. These beliefs in turn encourage a more positive attitude toward school an improvement in their behaviour and performance”

Brooks et al (1997) in their research on early school leavers noted that practitioners viewed **continual experiences of school failure** as a significant factor leading to school leaving. Their comments were summarised in the following **causal loop diagram**.

Figure 1 (Brooks et al, 1997: 17)



3.5.3 Other important contributing factors

Using a recent comprehensive review of Australian literature on 'at risk' students by Batten & Russell (1995), Brooks et al (1997), and other sources, Long R.(1998) suggest a number of contributing factors for leaving school early. They are as follows:

- a continuous experience of academic failure
- inflexible curriculum and teaching strategies
- alienating school environments
- family conflict and breakdown
- low self esteem
- poor student/teacher relationships
- disinterest in education
- disruptive behaviour

The research of Webber and Hayduk (1995: 115-140) determine that the following contribute significantly to the problem of early school leaving:

- homelessness (and unstable home environment)
- poor parenting
- family conflict
- poverty
- inadequate behaviour management
- the devaluing of education
- student behaviour
- substance abuse
- low self esteem
- educational structures, curriculum, procedures and staffing

It is not seen as necessary for this report to offer detailed analysis on the points listed above. Those requiring greater exploration of these risk factors, should refer to the Leaving School Early Report, Webber and Hayduk, 1995.

3.6 Education policy context

The discussion thus far has highlighted the problem and some characteristics of early school leaving in Australia. There would seem to be much policy surrounding young people and education, but Webber and Hayduk (1995) suggest there is some debate as to whether these policies are going to be practically achieved. They believe that there is:

".....a proliferation of generalised policy but a lack of accountability or responsibility to really assist young people, particularly the group of young people who are early school leavers."

(Webber and Hayduk, 1995: 49)

The profile of the overall pattern of education related programs has changed fairly constantly over the recent years as new policies are developed, budgets cut, or funds redirected by both Commonwealth and State/Territory governments. The primary bodies that fund and/or manage alternative education are as follows:

- Commonwealth Government
- Education Agencies, State/Territory government agencies and non government agencies

- Other (non education) State and Education agencies (such as youth and community welfare agencies)
- Non government organisations

There are some broad frameworks or policy now in place in Victorian schools and /or Victorian communities, which directly or indirectly address the issue of students ‘at risk’ of leaving school early. Some of these are listed below:

- Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Schools
- School Focused Youth Service
- Student Support Services Officers
- Health Promoting Schools
- Full Service Schools
- Communities That Care
- Education Maintenance Allowance

Schools at varying degrees will take up these initiatives depending on the identified need of the local student population. Many of these initiatives listed above are concerned with ‘**early intervention**’ or ‘**prevention**’ strategies for those ‘at risk’ young students. Some of these ‘early intervention’ responses may include **timely referral** to specific alternative education programs and the **provision of appropriate support**. Some of the different types of programs are discussed in the following section.

3.7 Types of models as possible solutions to those ‘at risk’ of leaving school early

Brooks et al (1997) list six intervention models which categorise common initiatives in Australia in addressing the needs of ‘at risk ‘ young people:

a) **Community based partial withdrawal:** Students are withdrawn on a part time or temporary basis for a period of time into a community setting. Students are expected to return to their mainstream school eg Heidelberg Teaching Unit.

2) **School based partial withdrawal:** These initiatives are similar to that above, except the intervention is specific to the particular school, and run at the school. Students are generally expected to return to, or be involved in the mainstream program eg Box hill Senior Secondary College.

3) **Community schools:** attempt to provide a complete alternative to mainstream school by operating an education and support program for students in the community with special needs. Students are not expected to return to mainstream eg Sydney Road Community School

4) **Outreach services:** provide intensive support services in relation to ‘at risk’ young students within a particular geographical area, usually providing for a number of schools. Outreach services are usually provided off campus. Young people are expected to stay in mainstream education eg Keeping in Touch with Schools Project.

5) **Integrated whole schools:** are characterised by a generalist focus on the needs of potential under age school leavers rather than specific programs that only target at risk students. I am unaware of any examples in Victoria.

6) **Event based initiatives:** focus on one particular activity such as a wilderness activity or bush camp. This approach aims to provide an extensive experience to help ‘turn young people around’. Young people would stay in their mainstream schools.eg Camp Mittagundi

The community based partial withdrawal (1) and community school (3) initiatives can be considered to be viewed at the end of the continuum of measures to assist the ‘at risk’ young person stay in education. (See Appendix 2 DEETS Staged Response to Students Experiencing Difficulties).

This report specifically looks in some detail at these two approaches (section 4 of this report) and in this there is an assumption that other efforts to engage or support the ‘at risk’ young person within the mainstream education setting have somehow failed.

3.8 Some negative views of alternative education sites

“Alternative schools are dumping grounds for bad kids”

“Kids are warehoused at alternative schools”

“Those alternative education sites are havens for outcast, misfits and losers.”

(Kellymayer, 1995)

There has always been some debate in education circles about whether those students considered at risk should be catered for inside mainstream education or outside of it. Those who support the former would support the view of ‘inclusivity’ and therefore believe that to educate those with difficulties in alternative venues is to stigmatise those young people. The latter would believe that mainstream education has failed these young people for many and varied reasons and that external solutions must now be considered.

Long (1998) quotes Webber and Hayduk (1995) and Stacher (1995:30) and believes that:

“The establishment of alternatives external to the school system is important for students ‘at risk’ because the young people themselves believe that the system has failed them, it offers them no solution. Young people who are trapped in cycles of failure and self fulfilling prophecies must be offered a new environment where they can believe that they can change their own future”.

There are some important advantages of separate alternative programs. Autonomy is easily preserved. Alternative programs based within schools still give the feeling of being part of a large institution. In an annexe or separate site the feeling is inevitably small and intimate. Often alternative sites are based in buildings not designed for schooling (ie church halls, houses) and the environment can feel less institutionalised and less school like.

3.9 Some characteristics of effective alternative programs

DEET’s Report St Leger et al (1999: 16) summarises the findings of Australian Batten and Russell (1995) and the American, Canadian and British Withers and Batten (1995) literature in some detail. They conclude that the literature both in Australia and overseas:

“Show that effective programs that result in real achievement by young people do have a number of recurring features, which include the following:”

a) Curriculum content and processes, student and teacher responsibilities:

- attention to the whole person incorporating social and personal as well as academic and social development (the program moves beyond the ‘risk’ to broader adolescent development)

- a focus on practical learning related to the student's life experiences and linked, where appropriate to a vocational pathway.(ie relevant)
- encouragement for students to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour and to be involved in decisions about the learning process including the use of incentives and negotiated contracts
- providing students the opportunity to work co operatively with others both outside and . inside the classroom
- High expectations of students and provision of programs which challenge and extend.
- Positive reinforcement of achievement, building on student strengths

b) School and classroom environment

- establishment of a caring and supportive environment
- organisational and operational flexibility in order to respond to individual needs
- appropriate evaluation of student progress by the use of assessment that matches the learning that has taken place and evaluation of the effectiveness of the program

c) Staffing

- careful selection of program teachers and coordinators (ie caring, friendly and enthusiastic) and the provision of professional development opportunities for persons in those roles

d) Community

- integration of school based programs for students at risk into mainstream educational provision
- involvement of parents and community in a collaborative endeavour for young people at risk and fostering of links with agencies outside the school program
- concern for students at risk that extends beyond the program through the use of follow up and monitoring

Brooks et al (1997:54) presents a similar list of strategies employed by alternative education programs in Australia. However their list also specifies the following:

- the provision of counselling to participants
(including case management with needs based counselling family therapy and referrals to support services)
- activities to increase literacy and numeracy
(including, specialist literacy and numeracy tutoring, temporary withdrawal with intensive work on basic skill and flexibility in curriculum to cater for students varying literacy skills)

3.9.1 Flexibility throughout the whole school

Gold and Mann in their research on 'Effective Alternative Schools'(1984:154-157) in the United States strongly assert that flexibility in alternative schools is critical to positive change in students. This flexibility runs through the whole school from administration to curriculum.

"Many of the concrete options for designing alternative programs may be selected on the basis of the general principle of enhancing flexibility. Flexibility in this instance means taking into account the individual students needs, fears, abilities and mood in conducting the daily business of education.....Our findings reveal a process by which the flexibility of school

administration leads to attachment to the school and hence a decline in disruptive behaviour”.

3.9.2 Comprehensive curriculum

Throughout the literature much is mentioned about the necessity of a flexible curriculum to meet the needs of each young person. Korn (1991) speaks more of the need for a comprehensive and flexible curriculum. A curriculum that is developed by staff and students to match local needs and interests, which is hands on and includes continuous opportunity to integrate cognitive and affective objectives (refer Appendix 3, Bloom's, Cognitive and Affective Categories for Exploring Curriculum Options). She suggests that the curriculum may include the following proficiency's ;

- instructional component
- personal development
- vocational/employment component
- community resources
- integration of social services
- integration of health care providers
- program strategies
- program goals and objectives
- student/teacher ratio

3.9.3 Technology to enhance learning

Means (1997) in her paper on 'Using technology to enhance engaged learning for 'at risk' young students' suggest that there is an emerging body of American research that supports the notion that technology used in classrooms can be especially advantageous to at risk young people. Technology, she believes if used correctly in the classroom, can engage students in challenging and authentic learning at their own pace.

“Today educational researchers are calling for a different use of technology. They promote classroom learning activities in which students work in small groups rather than in isolation or as a whole class. The technologies used in the classroom are not designed explicitly to teach basic skills, but rather are real world applications that support research, design, analysis, composition and communication”.

(Means 1997 Internet)

3.9.4 Accessibility of programs

There has not been much discussion in the literature about the importance of access to alternative education programs for young people. However it is my belief that programs need to be easily accessible with regard to:

- location
- age specifications
- referral process
- vacancies
- cost of entry

It would seem, that if a program is not accessible on these levels then it can not even begin to address the needs of the population it was set up to serve.

These elements of effective alternative education programs may be seen as ‘good practice’ benchmarks. They should not be viewed as a finite list but rather as building blocks for future successful outcomes for young people.

3.10 Evaluating Programs success

3.10.1 Evaluation designs

There is no doubt that evaluating the successes of alternative education programs is important but how best to conduct evaluations is rather more controversial or even confusing. Just as alternative education programs differ in some ways so too must their evaluations of what constitutes success. Such evaluations demand complex and lengthy enquires.

Kellmayer (1995) reports that: Duke and Muzio reviewed evaluations conducted in the 1970’s of 19 alternative schools. They listed the most serious problems with these evaluations as:

- lack of control or comparison group
- poor record keeping
- no randomised sample of students, teachers and parents
- failure to report data on students who withdraw from alternative programs
- lack of pre and post test comparison
- lack of follow up on those who complete alternative education programs

Kellmayer (1995:131) quotes one of the leading authorities on evaluation Scriven (1981) who says that:

“Evaluation is an extremely complicated discipline, what one might call a multi discipline”

Scriven encourages the use of what he calls ‘checkpoints’, which is a 15 point key evaluation checklist to use when conducting comprehensive program evaluations (see Appendix 4 Scriven’s Key Evaluation Checklist)

3.10.2 Some outcomes as measures of success

More recent evaluations in the **United States**, according to Kellmayer (1995) have been more rigorous, (if limited in number) and have focused on interviews with alternative education recipients in the area of, student satisfaction, rates of attendance, behavioural issues, student self esteem and academic achievements. Most have demonstrated success in the ‘affective’ needs of students and in additional areas of attendance, however what is not so clear is the effect of alternative education on academic achievement.

While the **Australian** literature contains no comprehensive definition of the success of programs in retaining potential early school leavers, a wide range of achievements and outcomes relating to reducing school leaving is cited.

Brooks et al (1997) believes the success of initiatives maybe evaluated by the following outcomes:

- improved participation and acceptance

- increase in self esteem
- decrease in disruptive behaviour
- personal development
- increase in literacy and numeracy skills
- decrease in expulsion/suspension/exclusions
- improved academic performance of participants
- improvements in student teacher relations
- improvement in school structures
- increased skills of teachers and other school staff
- strengthened home/school relations
- where appropriate re entry into mainstream education or entry into other educational/vocational pathways

Kellmayer (1995) believes the evaluation should also include important affective and health related data such as information concerning substance use/abuse, incidents of depression, mental illness and suicide attempts, number of students with babies and other demographic information. It might not be necessary for the schools itself to collect this information if the other health professionals involved with any young person are in fact doing so.

3.11 Conclusion

The literature has given us some insight into the characteristics and contributing factors of early school leavers. Similarly there has been much written about what constitutes models of 'good practice' in responding to the needs of the 'at risk' young people, with a specific focus on those sites that operate outside of mainstream schools. The following sections of this report will look at 15 case studies of alternative education settings in Victoria. The exploration of both practice and theory will offer us some valuable ideas for the eventual formation of an alternative education site for schools in the Yarra Valley cluster.

4. Summary Analysis of Consultations

This section summarises the information obtained from the consultations with the alternative education sites that are under study in this research. (See Appendix 5 for the list of those sites involved in the study). The focus of the summary is to understand the characteristics, similarities and differences of each site with respect to their models, staffing, management structures and funding arrangements. These examples will offer insights and ideas as to how alternative education is run and can be run in Victoria.

4.1 Characteristics of Alternative education sites included in this study

The alternative education sites chosen for this study represent a good mix of options for young people 'at risk' in Victoria. As outlined in the research design the sample includes Community Schools, Teaching Units, Integration Units and other Ancillary sites in both rural Victoria and inner and outer Melbourne. The range of characteristics across the sample are outlined as follows:

- Sites ranged in size from small units of 8-12 students to larger Community Schools of up to 138 students
- Funding varied from \$27,000 per annum to \$1 million per annum
- Staffing varied from 3 part time staff to 11 full time staff and 4 part time
- There were 2 rural, 2 urban fringe and 11 urban sites
- St Augustine's and Oasis offered programs for primary school aged students
- St Augustine's in Geelong offered 3 separate on site programs
- Models included 4 Community Schools, 2 Teaching Units, 2 Annexes, 4 Vocational, 1 Integration Unit and 4 other alternative/special schools
- Students ages ranged from 5 years to 18 years (8 programs exclusively enrolled those under 15 years of age, 6 programs enrolled all ages and 2 programs only those 15 years or older)
- Programs offered anything from 5 days per week full time study to 3 days part time study
- Outcomes for students vary, from integration back to mainstream education to full time employment. (3 programs offer short term interventions with the specific aim of re-integration back into mainstream education)

The diversity of programs is clearly highlighted by this comparative data making it difficult to make generalisations that are relevant or appropriate to all model types. It is probably of greater use to explore the many differences and consider their applicability with respect to specific target groups and particular models of service delivery.

Clearly one model does not fit all scenarios. Just as the needs of students are diverse so to must the range of options that are available to young people 'at risk'.

Issues for Consideration

- **The new alternative education setting is 'complementary' to those currently available.**
- **The target group for the new alternative setting is clearly understood**
- **The goals of the new alternative setting are clearly stated**
- **The size of the new alternative education setting be kept small, (less than 50 students)**

4.3 Funding

Given the different scope of programs it is not surprising that funding levels and funding sources vary considerably. The smaller initiatives such as Berry Street operate on a very small budget of \$27,000 per annum for staff wages and other associated costs and run a program for 3 half days per week for about 8-11 students. The largest, Sherbrooke Community school operates on 1 million per annum offering a P-12 program for 138 students.

The State Department of DEET administers the vast majority of alternative education program funding in Victoria. Other important sources include: The Department of Human Services, Juvenile Justice, non-government welfare agencies and Philanthropic Trusts. In this study DEET provided 88% of funds to 'on site' programs that were generally administered through DEET regional offices via host Secondary Schools. The exceptions to this were the Berry Street School which is funded by The Department of Human Services through their 'Children in Residential Services' Program and The GAP program which is funded by the 'DOXA Youth Foundation'; a Philanthropic Trust.

In addition to direct funding contributions, programs rely to varying degrees on different types of financial support. These are outlined as follows:

- 'In kind support' (ie administrative support, office space, tools, computer equipment etc),
- Volunteer staffing arrangements
- Service user contributions for materials, or per term
- Donations
- Grants

The Oasis program at Sunshine Secondary College offers us a good example of a mix of funding types. In addition to their annual program operation grant of \$3,000 from DEET Oasis have also secured a grant from the Local Council which provides for an outreach worker The Save the children's Fund provides \$100 per week for a nutrition program, the Builders Union has offered 'in kind support' with building materials and work experience and Students are expected to pay a small contribution of \$25.00 per term.

The GAP program relies heavily on the support of its volunteer staff who are involved in tutoring, extra curricular activities and social skills programs. Volunteers not only provide additional work force capacity but they often provide a vital link with the community.

Most alternative education programs agree that they are under funded and hence under resourced and so can not always provide the kinds of programs they would like to, nor are they able to satisfy the level of need that is seen in the community. Many site Co ordinators advised that in order to successfully set up an alternative education setting, appropriate and stable funding must be secured on a recurrent basis.

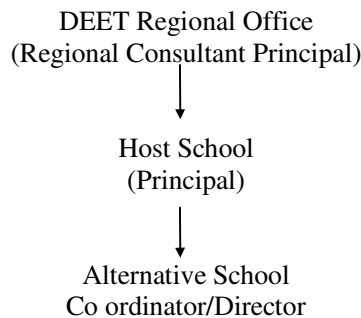
Issues for Consideration

- **The necessity for a secure and appropriate level of funding**
- **The professional use of volunteers**
- **That suitable accountability mechanisms with the funding body are arranged**
- **There is continuous fundraising to secure other monies for specific projects**
- **There is an ability to meet the funding bodies stated outcomes**

4.3 Management structure

Given that most programs are funded via DEET it follows that the management structures between DEET and alternative education settings are similar. Under these funding arrangements monies are allocated by DEET's 9 regional Offices (see Appendix 6 for a map of DEET regions) direct to alternative education sites or via their host schools global budgets. If funding is made directly to the alternative education site, the Coordinator/Director is generally responsible for these funds and accountable to their school management committee. Where funds are paid to host schools the Principal of the host school is responsible for the funds and again accountable to their School Councils. The following Diagram 1 depicts this management hierarchy:

Diagram 1 The Hierarchy with host school

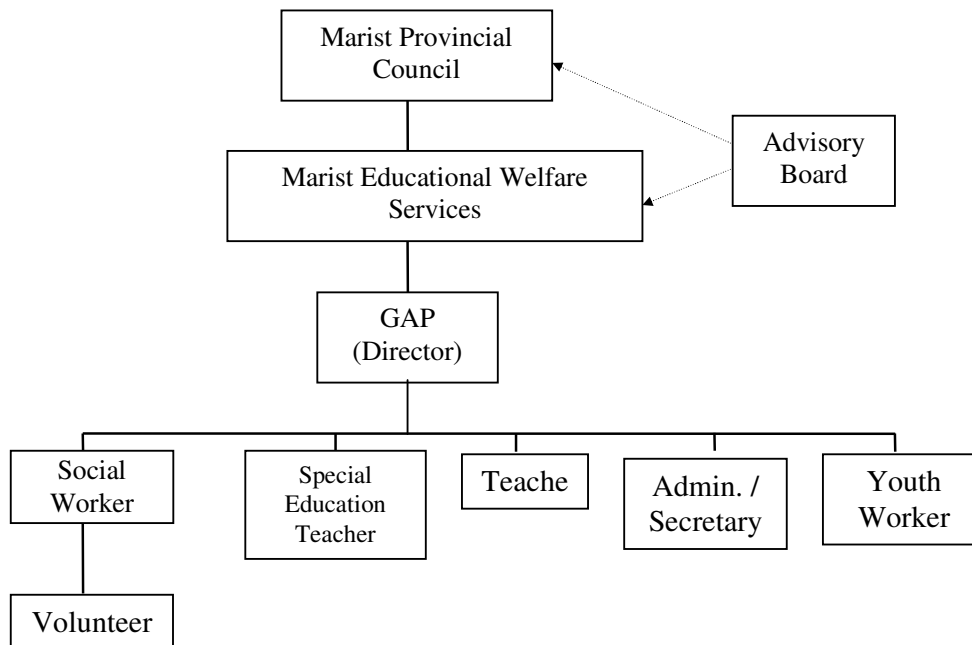


Most sites state that they enjoy useful levels of autonomy in the day to day operations of their programs. Those sites with host schools rely on the positive relationship, and good will of the host school Principals.

The Barkers Creek Annexe whose host school is Castlemaine Secondary College also has a Management Committee to advise/oversee the program. The Committee includes the Junior School Principal, representatives from the local primary school and the Barkers Creek Annexe Co ordinator. The committee representatives are well versed in the issues and problems confronting some of their students and believe their input can assist the annexe in making informed and appropriate decisions. This representation also increases the level of community ownership around the operation of the Annexe.

The GAP program management structure differs from those programs funded by DEET. The GAP program is auspiced by the Marist Education and Welfare Services and funded by the DOXA Youth Foundation. The GAP program reports to it's own Advisory Board, which is made up of representatives from the wider community ie social workers, lecturers, Principals etc. The Program Director is accountable to both his Advisory Board and to the Marist Provincial Council. This hierarchy is depicted in the following Diagram.

Diagram 2 The GAP Hierarchy



The Northern Region of DEET's working party (as part of the regional Student Services Consultative Group) support the establishment of local Management Committee's that meet regularly to make decisions regarding the operation of alternative education settings. They suggest that the committees should include:

- * The Principal of the host school (if host school involved)
- * The Co ordinator of the setting
- * Representatives of the settings staff
- * Student Support Staff representative
- * Other co-opted members as required

Clearly like any healthy organisation, internal and external mechanisms of communication and accountability in settings need to be both appropriate and effective.

Issues for Consideration

- **There are clear decision making structures in place**
- **There are open communication channels both 'bottom up' and 'top down'**
- **There is an Advisory Committee with appropriate community representation**
- **There is autonomy of day to day operations**
- **There is suitable accountability with management and funding bodies**
- **There is student participation in some decision making**

4.4 Staffing

“Teachers, realistic flexible, idealistic, sensitive, creative, enthusiastic, facilitative and skilled, are a sine qua non for our schools”

(Korn, 1991, 127)

The number of full time/part time staff varied between sites but so too did the number of students. The resounding point made by most sites was that the ratio of teachers to students is very important. The Heidelberg Teaching Unit (HTU) and the Coburg Teaching unit have 4 full time teaching staff who work with 12 students. However there are only 8 students in the unit at any one time. The other 4 students are in the process of enrolling or re integrating back into mainstream schools. This allows for a teacher student ratio of 1:2, which the HTU believes, is crucial in making a difference for their students. The Australian Education Union's (AEU) Welfare Teachers/Teaching Units Working Party's in their 'Guidelines for setting up a Secondary Teaching Unit' states that a ratio of 4 teachers to 8-12 students is the appropriate ratio (see Appendix 7 for the AEU's working parties Guidelines for setting up a teaching Unit).

The Island Work Education and Training Unit works on a similarly high teacher student ratio to achieve their goal of getting students 'job ready'. Currently they employ 9 full time staff (4 qualified teachers and 5 workshop instructors) and 3 part time staff. With a total of 48 students, groups are kept to a maximum of 8 students per supervising teacher. This allows for both group cohesion and a healthy level of individual attention to every student.

The following table depicts the range of teacher/staff to student ratios for the alternative education sites explored in this study.

Table 1 Teacher to student ratio

Alternative Education Site	Student population	Full time staff	Part time staff*
Baltara Integration Unit	7	3	1
Collingwood Alternative School	25	4.2	
Lynall Hall	80	9.2	6 approx.
The Island	48	9	3
Kensington Community School	90	11.6	5.5
Number One	27	3	
Coburg/Preston Teaching Unit	8-12	4	
Sydney Road Community School	100	6	6
St Augustines; St Helens	12	4	
St Augustines; The School	12	4	
St Augustines; New School	12-16	4	

Berry Street School	8-12		3
Sherbrooke Community School	138	11	10
Barkers Creek Annexe	11	1	6-7 p/t & sessional
The GAP	8-12	5	
Heidelberg Teaching Unit	8-12	4	
Sunshine Annexe, Oasis	16-23	2	3

* The part time figure is not the number of full time equivalents.

As we can observe from the table, the ratio of full time staff to students does not exceed 1:16 and on average is shown to be about 1:7-8. Obviously, the arrangements of part time staff and the numbers of teachers, administration staff, outreach workers and welfare staff will impact on these ratios.

The GAP program and St Augustine's program state that it is very important to employ youth workers or social workers along side teachers to work with young people in alternative education settings. Both programs believe that the mix of disciplines allows for a more holistic approach to working with young people 'at risk'. The Gap program is very clear that the young person's social needs must be met before they will truly be able to achieve in education. Their view is that these needs are more appropriately met by the full time social worker than the teaching staff.

A theme common to all sites was the importance of recruiting highly skilled and committed staff. Most agree that teaching 'at risk' students requires respecting students, a lot of patience, and a good sense of humour over and above sound teaching practice. According to Korn 1991, teachers should be employed on their personal qualities first:

"The most important student need is the presence of an understanding, sensitive, friendly, enthusiastic, supportive, flexible honest adult. This person provides a safe homebase for the younger person and a knowledgeable companion, role model and adviser for the older student. This person spends a great deal of time with the students and is available when needed. Most frequently this person is a paid full time staff member, whose presence is a solid dependable fact".

(Korn, 1991:127)

The HTU and Sherbrooke Community School suggest that staff teams need to role model co-operation and team spirit to their students. Providing a stable staff team for programs was often seen to assist the stability of its students. As a direct consequence many sites noted the importance of looking after good staff with respect to the financial stability of the program and professional development opportunities. Much as resources were seen as inadequate by many professional development and supervision of staff was seen as crucial to the long term success of programs. The report 'Public Education, Next Generation' (PENG) recommends:

" That the Government make a significantly increased funding commitment to professional development to ensure that teachers and school leaders are equipped for the challenges of preparing students for life and work in a society facing major social and environmental challenges and being transformed by a revolution in information and communications technology"

(DEET, 2000:46)

Issues for Consideration

- **There are appropriate teacher to student ratios**
- **There is a mix of staff, ie teachers (primary, special, secondary) with youth workers or social workers**
- **The staff come together as a team**
- **The staff are selected on personal qualities and teaching skills**
- **The staff team is stable**
- **There is adequate provision for supervision and professional development of staff**

4.5 Models

While all sites under study have characteristics, which make them distinct it is possible to identify a number of models with similar interventions or frameworks. The models that have been identified are as follows:

Community Schools

A community school may be best described as, “ *a small school with an alternative educational philosophy to the regular secondary colleges, which emphasises pastoral care, a high level of participation of students, parents and teachers in the decision making processes, a relevant individualisation of the education program and a supportive learning environment....*”

(Brooks et al, 1997:50-51)

The Community Schools that have been included in this study are Sherbrooke, Kensington, Lynall Hall and Sydney Road. The distinctive characteristics of the community school as seen in our examples may be described in the following ways: they:

- share common philosophies of cooperation and community involvement
- offer education from grade 7-Year 12, for students 12-18 years of age, (Sherbrooke P-12)
- are larger than all other alternative sites and considerably smaller than mainstream education settings, ie approximately 90-138 students
- offer mainstream education curriculum, including the VCE
- do not specifically target ‘at risk’ young people, but work with many of them
- are locally relevant for the student population
- are funded by DEET according to global budget guidelines for mainstream schools.
- have been established since the 70’s
- have a teacher to student ratio of 1:10-16, which is higher than other alternative education providers, but lower than mainstream schools.

Teaching unit

A teaching unit offers a short term intervention program for a small group of students from a number of schools in a local region, who are having behavioural problems in their mainstream school settings.

(HTU referral documents 2000)

Of those sites interviewed, the Heidelberg Teaching Unit and the Coburg Teaching Unit offer us the 'best' examples of this model of intervention for 'at risk' young people. The Baltara Integration Unit, The Barkers Creek Annexe, The GAP and St Augustines, St Helens and The School clearly share some similar characteristics that befit this model. Those shared characteristics are noted below; they:

- target 'at risk' young people
- service young people under 15 years of age
- generally aim at re integration back to main stream
- are very small in size, 7-12 students at any one time
- are short term (1-2 semesters) behavioural intervention
- have strong links to mainstream Secondary Schools
- have a high teacher to student ratio usually 1:2-3
- work with mainstream curriculum subjects with a flexible approach
- offer individualised student programs

Vocational

"Vocational Programs are typified by either a focus on gaining a qualification or a focus on job search skills. Some of these programs are located in the TAFE sector, some are school based and linked to the TAFE sector. Generally they assist young people with access to training and work, through traineeships, apprenticeships and job search skills. These may be on a one-to-one basis or in workshops".

(Ward et al, 1999)

The Island Education, Training and Employment, St Augustine's New Street, Number one and The Oasis may be best described as models preparing young people for employment and training pathways. Some of the common characteristics of these models can be identified as follows; they:

- generally work with students who are 15 years of age and over (Oasis will enrol 12 year olds)
- have strong links with TAFE programs (ie VET), apprenticeships and traineeship and Job pathways/placement programs
- offer accredited learning, ie Certificate of General Education, Certificate of Workplace learning
- target 'at risk' young people
- are medium sized ie 20-50 students at any one time
- value work experience
- offer vocational based curriculum, ie catering, carpentry, automotive etc
- are time limited, usually from 6 months to two years.
- generally aim at further training or employment for young people

'Alternative' School

Collingwood Alternative describes itself as "*a small school setting which seeks to provide appropriate educational opportunities through an activities based program for students to enhance their potential as individuals and members of the community. The school aims to provide access and success for all students based on the provision of an alternative curriculum and to actively redress educational disadvantage.*"

(CAS school brochure 2000)

In some respects Collingwood Alternative can be likened to the Community School model. The main differences being that it;

- has a small student population (approx 25 students)
- has a high teacher to student ratio (ie 1:6)
- targets 'at risk' young students
- enrolls students from all over metropolitan Melbourne
- has activity based classes
- has a student welfare focus

The Berry Street School was established in 1997 in response to the needs of young people in residential care with Berry Street welfare services. The Berry Street School's beginnings and funding arrangements are very different to other models in this study. Berry Streets model targets those young people who are 'at risk' and who are living in substitute care arrangements. Generally they work with those young people who are displaced from educational settings, mainstream or alternative. The program has some similarities with the Teaching Units and with Collingwood Alternative. Its unique features are seen as follows; it

- offers a part time program only
- targets those young people 'at risk' in Substitute Care arrangements
- is funded by the Department of Human Services
- aims to link students into other alternative settings or traineeships
- has an informal/flexible approach to learning
- has non compulsory attendance
- is not curriculum based

Issues for Consideration

- **The suitability of a model for a particular target group**
- **The possibility of a 'hybrid' model for the 'best fit'**
- **The expected outcomes of the program, ie high attendance, increased self esteem, re integration to mainstream education, employment**
- **The cost of the model type**
- **The welfare component of the program**
- **Whether the program is full time and/or part time**
- **The length of stay in the program**

4.6 Government Policy perspective

During 2000 we have seen the completion of two extensive consultations in the education sector commissioned by the State Government of Victoria's Minister for Education and the Minister for Post Compulsory Education and Training. After discussions with DEET staff it is clear that the 'Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria', chaired by Peter Kirby and 'Public Education The Next Generation' (PENG) chaired by Lindsay Connors will provide the framework and recommendations for policy direction for the consolidation of education training and employment for young Victorians. Both reports highlight the need for collaboration and integration between education/training providers, government agencies and the community. These reports offer a 'context' for the future establishment of alternative education sites for 'at risk' young people.

In consultations with DEET both centrally and in the northern region (see Appendix 8 for the interview schedule) it is without doubt that alternative/ancillary education settings are seen as crucial to the needs of some young people. There was a commonly held view that mainstream education does not work for everyone and that there is a need for a diverse range of alternative programs to suit a diverse range of young people. The 'Northern Metropolitan Regional Director's Alternative Settings Review Advisory Group' recommend:

- That the delivery of comprehensive education be expanded to include alternative settings
- That there be recognition of the need for alternative settings state wide as legitimate, credible settings. There will always be a need for marginalised students.
- That there be recognition that there is a need for both short and long term alternative settings
- That there be recognition that a range of programs will provide for the needs of different groups of students.

An expansion of financial support from DEET to support future alternative programs is less clear. In 1996 a working party for the review of Alternative/Ancillary programs was established to consider alternative/ancillary programs that cater for students experiencing significant difficulties adjusting to mainstream education. The working party produced a report and placed alternative programs in the context of the **Framework for Student Support Services** in Victorian Government Schools. The major thrust of the report was accepted and an additional allocation of \$1.2 million was provided from the beginning of the 1999 school year. The working party also made recommendations that:

- Central funds should be reallocated to regions using an agreed formula
- That DEET regions manage and facilitate the development of programs
- That central resources currently allocated to ancillary/alternative programs be regionally managed
- That these funds be used exclusively for the facilitation of programs experiencing difficulties with their schooling
- That schools contribute significantly to the costs associated with these programs

(Please see Appendix 9 which is a letter from the Office of the Minister for Post Compulsory Education and Training, on future management and funding of alternative educational programs).

DEET currently **reviews** programs they fund triennially through their regional offices. The 'Working party for the Review of Ancillary/Alternative Sites' suggest that:

- Programs should be accountable through the collection and reporting of data across a range of performance indicators
- This information to provide the basis for an annual report from the local management committee to the appropriate General Manager (schools) and the Office of Review.

DEET personnel agree that **outcomes** for sites will vary but may include, improved attendance of students, future access to employment or further training, return to mainstream education or improved literacy or numeracy. However the 'Working Party for the Review of Ancillary/Alternative Sites state:

"That the primary goal of all 'off site' programs be the full time return of the students to the regular (referring) school"

(DEET 1998:26).

Issues for Consideration

- **That the establishment of a new alternative site be in accordance to those frameworks and recommendations of the ‘Ministerial review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria’ and the ‘Public Education, Next Generation’ reports.**
- **That there are evaluation /accountability mechanisms and performance indicators that will provide information on the success and/or failures of the program**
- **The expected outcomes of the program will be stated and measured**
- **There is development of networks between education providers, local government, community agencies and DEET both centrally and regionally**

5. CASE STUDIES

This section presents the 15 alternative education sites that were involved in this study. Each site is written up in a similar format so that information is easily compared. The information is presented under the following headings:

- Background
- Philosophy/aims/target population
- Referral/length of stay
- Funding/management
- Staffing arrangements
- The Program
- Community links
- Evaluation/outcomes
- Other interesting comments

All of the information collected was through one to one interviews with site Directors or site Co ordinators. Some of the information in the report is taken straight from written materials that were made available by these providers. The information that is presented is in summary form only, but endeavours to capture the spirit and integrity of each of the alternative education sites under study.

BERRY STREET SCHOOL

Yan Yen Road

Diamond Creek 3089

Ph: 9434 1111

Co ordinator: Pam Hullin and Sue Molnar, Educational liaison officer

Background

Berry Street School began in April 1997. It grew out of a need to connect young people in substitute care to a **meaningful and positive learning situation**. Many of the young people accommodated through Berry Street's residential care program were no longer attending school due to suspensions, expulsions or just refusal to go. Since it's inception the school has been housed in Diamond Creek, Melbourne's rural fringe. The school is able to **enrol up to 11 young people** who have failed in mainstream education settings (this figure may be less depending on the mix of young people attending). Generally referrals are from other Berry Street Programs, however if there is a vacancy other young people may be enrolled. There are no regional boundaries for entry to the program however most young people who attend are from the North East.

Philosophy/aims /and target pop.

The key **aim** of the school is to link disadvantaged, disenchanting, displaced young people to an educational program where they can succeed.

The **target population** is secondary students between the age of 13 and 18 who are in substitute care arrangements with Berry Street. (90% of the schools enrolments are boys). Often these young people are those who have failed in mainstream settings and other alternative education settings. The school suggests they are the 'last stop' for many young people. The pathway from the Berry Street School for many of these young people is often into other alternative programs.

The **philosophy** is based on the belief in 'the goodness of all people'. A real 'belief' in the young person. As a consequence young people are respected and treated with care and friendship, they are welcomed into the program, with no labels. The program is flexible so that it caters to the individual needs of the young person. Eventually these aspects lead to a real sense of ownership about the program and of the school.

Referral/length of stay

Referrals are made informally, over the phone. Often referrals are made by case workers in other Berry Street programs. Some information about the young person is required so that the dynamic amongst those already in attendance is not disrupted. The school offers a time limited casual waiting list. Young people may **stay** from 13 years of age right up until they are 18. However most stay for about 18 months. They are able to join the program at any time if the school is not running at full capacity.

Funding /management

The program is managed very autonomously by the program coordinator, Education liaison officer and teaching staff. (However it is part of the larger Berry Street management hierarchy, where these educational staff report to the Program Manager of Residential Services, who reports to a Regional Manager up to the CEO and the Board of executives).

The education program is funded through the Commonwealth Government through monies for Children in Residential Care (CIRC). These funds are provided by the Commonwealth, to Human Services centrally then out to the regions, then into Berry Street's residential care services. The annual budget is **\$27,000**, which provides for staff wages. Some fund raising efforts are carried out and donations gratefully received.

Staffing arrangements

Currently the program operates three days per week (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday). There are two staff who work 16 hours per week and a third who works twelve hours per week.

The program

Much of the focus of the program is on **'affect'**. Many of the young people have low self esteem, are violent and have few social skills. The program is concerned with how the young people co operate together as a group and how subjects are taught.

The educational program is **very flexible**. Each student has an individualised educational program to best suit his or her needs. The student in negotiation with the teachers determines what area they will focus on and at what pace. Most young people do a lot of work on numeracy and literacy. (There have been a few very capable or even gifted students who have attended the program where this has not been the focus). Art and craft on Thursdays is provided for those who want to do it. This term Physical Education has been run by a group external to the program.

The Education Liaison officer and the Co ordinator work closely with the students around what their interests are and where they would like to be at the end of the program. If a student is clear about a particular interest or pathway this is will become the focus.

Community links

Berry Street is part of a very large welfare organisation offering a number of services to young people. Consequently this program has very **good access to accommodation services, case workers, family mediation etc.** Currently the program relies on the individual worker personal contacts in the community for other services. This is an area the staff are hoping to broaden.

Parental involvement at the school is not encouraged as most young people are living out of home due to serious conflict abuse etc. The staff promote the school as a safe, friendly and happy environment and will protect this rigorously.

Evaluations/outcomes

There is **constant and ongoing evaluation and reflection in the team**. The school is not static, there is constant change new ideas and innovations. Young people's success needs to be evaluated in an ongoing way with their case workers. The school is hoping that young people 'get on their feet again' and start to feel confident and build their self esteem, so they might then be ready for new challenges. If they have achieved this then they have been successful. The Commonwealth is interested in how many young people are serviced and in what time frames. The school usually submits a report yearly to the funding body, but this seems to have changed under the new government.

Evaluations should be in response to the young persons needs being met. (for example did the young person get what they wanted from this program?)

Other interesting comments

Young people need programs like the Berry Street School, as **mainstream education does not fit all young people**. So many young people do not succeed socially or academically in large homogenous institutions. When this happens they need a fresh start away from the school in an environment that does things differently.

The success of this program is related to the dedication of the teaching staff. The program runs on the 'smell of an oily rag', but the staff believe that what they lack in resources they make up for in dedication and enthusiasm. "Good staff who are patient, respectful, and humorous are crucial. There is no 'them and us' mentality. There are not many rules to break either." (Pam Hullin)

SHERBROOKE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

311 Mount Dandenong Road

Sassafrass 3787

Ph: 9755 2007

Principal: Bob Shepherd

Background

Sherbrooke Community School (SCS) was first established in 1985, by Ferntree Gully teachers and local parents who were disillusioned with mainstream education. The school is a p-12 school with 30 primary students and just over a **100 secondary students**. It is located on 2.5 hectares of land on the outskirts of Sassafrass under the trees of the Dandenong ranges.

The school services a **generalist population**, however those 'at risk' young people that do enrol enjoy the friendly, less authoritarian, community approach to school life. Sherbrooke is a State school, and is open to young people throughout Melbourne. The school year is no different to other schools. Some young people enrol in their primary years and continue on into VCE. Many young people enrol at year 7. There is now a waiting list for all years.

Philosophy/Aim/Enrolment

Parents often choose this school on the basis of its philosophy or because their children have experienced a lack of success at previous schools. The **guiding principle** of the school is that it is a co-operative endeavour, involving students, parents and teachers in all areas of the decision-making and in all aspects of the school. (See Appendix 12 for Sherbrooke's Beliefs about Education)

The school **aims** to educate young people in a holistic and student focused way and to ensure that young people reach their potential and achieve success. The school is committed to high academic achievement.

Enrolment usually involves an interview at the school (with student and parent if appropriate), followed by an orientation program. Families are informed of the school's program, policies and procedures their responsibility to the school community and also where they are on the waiting list.

Funding/management

Sherbrooke is a State school **funded by DEET**. The yearly budget is **1 million** including all wages. Like most schools there is the usual fundraising efforts. Currently the school asks for a contribution per term from both primary and secondary students.

The school has a Principal (Executive officer on the school council), an Assistant Principal and a school Council. The school has a history of strong parental involvement and this is apparent today in all aspects of school life.

Staffing

The school runs a full time program, 5 days per week. There are **11 full time staff**, two of whom are primary teachers, (including a non teaching Assistant Principal and Principal). Added to this are **5 sessional teachers** and 5 integration aides (10% of the schools population are integration students) There is a real belief in the importance of recruiting 'good' staff and looking after them so as a direct consequence professional development and supervision are seen as essential to this.

The Program

The school provides a **P- 12 course of study** in the following eight general areas;

English

Maths

LOTE

Technology Arts	Science Society and the environment	Health and Physical education
<p>All students belong to a home group which is the focus for pastoral care, promotion of co-operative group behaviour, participation in school function and decision making and the promotion of school communication between school and home. The nature and function of the Pastoral Care Program is unique to the school. Each home group (mix of students from years 7-12) meet for three hours every week. In these cross tutoring groups' respect, responsibility and cooperation are taught and practiced. Social activities, camps, excursions, school and community projects are organised and implemented.</p> <p>The flexibility of the negotiated curriculum allows for personalised programs to be developed and individual needs to be met. The school is committed to a policy of full integration of students with disabilities or special needs. The school offers specialist literacy and numeracy programs for those who need it, and from year 9, opportunities for TAFE courses traineeships or work experience. Technology is considered a vital subject for future success in the employment market.</p> <p>Community Links</p> <p>The school has close links to it's community. The school strives to be a willing and active educational resource for the wider community. It makes it's resources available to groups and individuals in the local community and uses community resources extensively in it's day to day program. The school enjoys links with the wider community groups such as the CFA, the local Police, the Lions and Rotary clubs, local environmental groups and many others. Students participate in work experience in a range of local businesses and organisations, which often donate goods and services to the school. Students work with community groups on significant projects as part of their studies, ie voluntary work tree planting and at the Salvation Army soup kitchen.</p> <p>The school has a well organised support network for those young people considered to be 'at risk'. The school employs two part time Psychologist from their welfare budget (employed to do group work and individual counselling) and also uses a Social Worker and two Guidance Officers from the Department of Education. Together with the local Belgrave Youth Resource group and the Yarra Ranges Youth group they can offer a very good response to those young students with problems.</p> <p>Evaluation Mechanisms</p> <p>Like most State Secondary Schools Sherbrooke evaluates its performance in the light of the CSF, VCE results and their own benchmarking. More recently they have started to collect data from a yearly survey of students who have left the school. The staff are keen to understand where students go and what happens to them. To date the school has had good results in VCE performance and the majority of students when leaving go onto TAFE, University or work.</p> <p>Within the school there is a constant review of the 'student needs' programs, a changing curriculum (on the basis of student negotiation), and review of the school charter.</p> <p>Other comments of interest</p> <p>Sherbrooke is all about co operation and that young people be 'extended' in all aspects of who they are. There is co-operation between teachers, students parents and the local community. SCS role models healthy 'ways of being' together in a school at home and in a society. It is keen to assist young people to become robust and resilient, self managing, self motivated self respecting and respectful of others. The school is small in size but big in outlook. It promotes and supports the exchange of students ideas and activities. Class groups and individual students are encouraged to visit other educational institutions for cultural and social events whether these be local, national or even international. There is an open door policy where students, school groups, parents and other visitors are welcomed to Sherbrooke on a daily basis.</p>		

THE SUNSHINE ANNEXE 'OASIS'

Sunshine Secondary College, Graham Street

Sunshine 3020

Ph: 9364 7285

Co ordinator: Martin Phillips

Background

Oasis, formerly known as the Sunshine Community Annexe was established in 1993 under the initiative of the Sunshine Secondary College Principal, Mr Peter Forbes. The program is currently housed on the third floor of Sunshine Secondary College in Melbourne's western suburbs. The annexe has a capacity to offer an alternative education and training program to **16 young 'at risk' students**. At times it has worked with as many as 23 young people. Originally it was set up to service only those students from Sunshine Secondary College however today it services many schools and has referrals of young people from **all over Melbourne**.

Philosophy/Aims/Target

The majority of those who attend 'Oasis' are young boys between 11 and 16 years of age (currently there are three girls). The demand for places spans primary, secondary and post-compulsory school age children. They are **generally characterised** as those who have failed to achieve success in mainstream schools or even other alternative programs. They usually present with challenging behaviours and learning difficulties and tend to be considered 'at risk', educationally, socially and emotionally. Most of the young people attending the annexe have a history of family issues and hence most live in alternative care arrangements.

'Oasis' is modelled on *The Island Work Education and Training Unit*, in North Fitzroy. It is based on the **philosophy** that every child is able to learn given sufficient time and support within a learning environment that they respect and have time to access fully. Oasis provides for this through it's holistic and integrated approaches to learning and doing with a particular emphasis on the development of manual and social skills.

The **program aims** to maintain full time attendance. It is hoped that through the connection to the program, the staff and each other, that young people will gain specific and sufficient skills to be able to rebuild their lives and gain employment or further training.

Referral/Length of stay

Referrals to the program are generally from Primary and Secondary Schools, welfare agencies or Juvenile Justice. Initial contact for enrolments is made and an interview time arranged. Prospective students and their parents or carers are shown around Oasis and further discussions are held. The program is most interested in what a young person is interested in doing and what they are good at, rather than their negative behaviours or performance. Young people or their carers are asked to pay \$25 per term, however this is not usually pursued.

Students are able to **attend the program** for an indefinite period of time. This reflects the idea of working with young people on the basis of 'where they are at' and 'where they want to get to'. Many young people are not ready to move on after a semester or even a year.

Funding/ Staffing/Management

Oasis is primarily funded through DEET by the Global Budget of Sunshine Secondary College, donations, fundraises and volunteer support. (This funding reflects the original intention that the program would take students from Sunshine Secondary College only. However Oasis has now become a region wide provider for young people). The (1999) funding allows for:

- 1x1 Co ordinate (level 12) with an additional \$2000 allowance.5x1
- Numeracy and Literacy teacher (level 12) primary trained

- .8x1 Teachers Aide
- program grant of \$3000 for resources for the school year, accounts
- administration, utilities, cleaning, telephone and postage

Currently there is also a **full time outreach worker** who is employed at the Oasis on grant monies until the end of term 4, 2000. The Save the Children fund provides \$100 per week, for a nutrition program. The children are involved in shopping, budgeting and the preparation of lunch and breakfast.

The Program

Students attend the program on a **9-day fortnight**. The hours of operation are 8.45 am until 3.45 pm. The student day off per fortnight usually falls on a Friday and is often used for personal matters such as doctors appointments. It is important that all students start the Oasis program with a focus and clear goals. The orientation interviews at the start of the year provide for this planning and negotiating.

The different subjects **are designed around the learning needs of the students**. Two hours per day are spent in formal 'classroom' teaching with the afternoons used for workshop skill development and project work. Workshops for this year include;

Numeracy and literacy	Metal Shop	Art
Mechanics	Adolescent Health and Nutrition	Stained Glass
Occupational Health and Safety	Physical Education and Sport	Computers
Computers	Outdoor Education	
Cooking and Catering	Woodwork	

(There are 4 mini camps 1 big camp and lots of day trips over the year.)

Community Links

Currently Oasis works with numerous welfare providers, residential units and Schools. These agencies are usually determined by the needs of any young person attending the program. Oasis would like to see greater input and support from those who refer young people to the program. Staff often feel like young people are 'dumped' at Oasis, instead of everyone working together in the interests of the young person.

Parental involvement is 'guarded' and 'limited' as many of these young people are in conflict with their parents and contact is very minimal. No parent or other persons are allowed to visit the young person at the Oasis site without the clear permission of the young person. Oasis is considered a 'safe place' and hence must be kept this way.

Evaluations/Outcomes

Evaluation is done daily, in a reflective and ongoing way. Debriefing occurs at the end of everyday. Planning and evaluations are organised at the end of each term. They are also concerned as to where their young people go after they finish the program. The staff will stay in touch with a young person for years after they have left the program. Generally the young people **return** to mainstream education, go onto TAFE, apprenticeships or work. The Department of Education Employment and Training requires that Oasis work with an agreed number of students over certain time frames. Other **outcomes** are more 'qualitative' in nature and may include, increased resiliency, development of positive attitudes to themselves and others, improved communication skills, reduction in the risk of homelessness, increased numeracy and literacy, and improved attendance.

Other interesting comments

Staff who enjoy trust, and respect young people are crucial to the success of this program. The staff and the young people work together as a team in a consistent way. "These young people have had so many experiences of failure, at the Oasis we want them to, rediscover and take pleasure in their ability to learn and succeed". (Oasis brochure 1999)

HEIDELBERG TEACHING UNIT

Reservoir District S.C.

Plenty Road, Reservoir 3073

Ph: 9470 3403

Co ordinator: Mick Butler

Background

The Heidelberg Teaching Unit (HTU) opened its doors in 1984. It is located on the grounds of Reservoir District Secondary School in Melbourne's northern region. The Program may be best described as short term (**up to 20 weeks**) behavioural modification intervention, with a strong educational focus. The program offers places to 12 Secondary Students, from schools in the Northern Region. The unit **targets** those young people who are **12-15 years of age** and encountering major behavioural problems in their main stream school. Students remain enrolled at their mainstream school while at the unit and continue to spend one or two days a week at the referring school.

Philosophy/Aims/Target population

The unit **believes** in the re engagement of young people back into education. Many of the young people who attend are school refusers, or have become excluded in their schools due to poor classroom behaviours. (The young people often have poor social skills, are isolated from their peers and are aggressive). The HTU works hard to offer young people an opportunity to become connected to the school environment, the teaching staff and their own learning. There is a belief that young people need to succeed at school to want to remain at school.

The program **aims** for the successful re-integration of the student back into their school. The program is not remedial. Where student's behaviour is in part due to their learning problems, their referral will only be considered where the mainstream school is using a modified program for the young person, or is willing to offer one. It attempts to develop within students a range of behavioural strategies that will help them overcome the difficulties they are having and enable them to experience greater success at school.

Referral

Referrals must be made by schools in co-operation with the students and their parents. All parties must complete referral documents. Once these forms are completed they are returned to the unit and a series of meetings occur between class teachers, student and their carers, and other agencies that may be involved with the young person. If the referral is accepted a start date for the young person is organised. (Intake is staggered so that the students start and finish at the unit at different times). Generally the referrals are young men.

Funding/Management

The Reservoir District Secondary School provides the wages for the staff from their global budget. The **DEET (Northern Region) provides \$1500 each term to provide for resources, overheads etc.** The usual school fundraisers and donations are required to prop up the budget.

The HTU has a Co ordinator who is directly responsible to the Principal of Reservoir District Secondary School who is the Executive Officer of the School Council. Outside of the school the unit is accountable to the Regional Consulting Principal at DEET Northern region. The school enjoys a useful level of autonomy.

Staffing arrangements

There are 4 full time teaching staff including the Co ordinator. This allows for a teacher student ratio in the classroom of 1:2. There are only **8 students in the unit at any one time** with the 4 others in process of enrolling or re integrating back into their school.

The Program

The program includes subjects that are part of the **normal school curriculum** but units are modified to suit the students needs. The subjects currently on offer are:

Maths	Art
English	General Studies
Health and Human Relations	Physical Education
Home Economics	Sport

The program is **educationally focused**. There are also camps and excursions, a homework program, a study habits program and an organisational skills program.

The unit maintains **very close links with the students host school** through the following mechanisms:

- teacher and student visits to the unit
- student returning to some classes after a very brief period of full time attendance at the unit
- teachers at the school keep the student supplied with current school work
- a few students from mainstream schools are invited to attend the unit

The program aims at helping young people to feel confident and to form better habits around their school life.

Community Links

The HTU tries to work with those adults already involved with the young people who attend the unit. If they need greater supports they will be referred to those in the region. There are times when Reservoir District School Social Workers or Guidance Officers will work closely with the young people at the unit.

The unit encourages a **coordinated and case managed** approach to working with students.

The staff are committed to maintaining close links to the home, they encourage visits and phone calls from the family/carers. With every student parents/carers are kept up to date with the students progress. This involvement of parents/carers has become crucial to helping students. Where appropriate the unit will link in families to relevant resources.

Evaluation/Outcomes

The HTU is accountable to the Regional School Council and Reservoir District Secondary College. The unit reviews every young person after they have returned to their school after 6 weeks then again in 2 months. There is also one follow up visit. DEET is interested in how 'effective' the unit is and measure the units success on how many young people are seen in any given time. DEET is also concerned about unit costs (number of students per costs over the year). DEET has reviewed the program on 6 or 7 occasions and has been highly complimentary about what is achieved.

Currently the HTU works very closely with the **Austin Hospital phycologists** around many of the young people they support.

Other Interesting Comments

The program is of the belief that **well skilled and committed staff** and a **high staff to student ratio** is what makes this program successful. The staff must work together as a highly functioning stable force. The staff team must model co-operation and team spirit. Money must be spent on resources for these programs so that young people have many options around their learning.

BARKERS CREEK ANNEXE

C/- Castlemaine Secondary College

Barkers Creek School Road

Castlemaine 3450

Ph: 5474 2133

Co ordinator: Sandy McCrumb

Background

The Barker's Creek Annexe (BCA) begun in 1994 under the initiative of Castlemaine Secondary College in rural Victoria. The BCA began in response to students with low levels of literacy and numeracy. Over the years the focus of the BCA has shifted to one of 'behaviour modification'. Today the BCA is located in Barkers Creek School Road, in the old Primary school on the outskirts of Castlemaine. It offers **11 students aged 12–15 years** a place in the program for one semester. The program is an early intervention initiative.

Philosophy/Aim/Target group

The program operates on the **ideology** that young people need to be 'connected' to their school in order to achieve meaning and success in their work. Many young people begin to disengage from school in years 7 and 8 or even earlier. The BCA **aims** to re engage these young people through a practical, accessible and relevant program suited to their needs.

Many of the young people **who attend** the BCA are those with poor behaviour at school, poor social skills and limited strategies for dealing with conflict situations. Many of the young people have difficult family lives and have parents who experience generations of 'unemployment'. Currently there are 3 girls and 7 boys referred from Castlemaine Secondary School from year 7 and 8.

Referral

At the beginning of 2000 a new Co ordinator was employed at the BCA and the early intervention focus begun. So too did a new referral process. The **selection criteria** for entry to the program is as follows:

- Students were initially identified using the results of their numeracy and ACER tests
- 67 student in year 7 and 8 were tested at below Grade 6 literacy and all had low numeracy levels
- These students were given an American Guidance Survey to ascertain their social skills, in particular their co-operation and self control
- The names of 22 students who scored highly were distributed to teachers for feedback
- 15 letters were sent out to parents offering their children a place at the BCA
- 11 students took up the offer

Funding/Management/Staffing

The BCA is funded by the **DEET regional office of Loddon Campase** and provides wages of **\$45,418** to the unit. This provides for the Co ordinator. The actual full cost of the program is \$90,000, the difference being made up by Castlemaine Secondary College.

The College staff provides for the following;

4 periods of social skills	4 periods of maths
3 periods of foods	2 periods of electronics
4 periods of outdoor education	3 integration aids at different times

The program is managed by a Committee of Management, which includes the BCA Co ordinator, the Principal of the junior school and representatives from two primary schools.

Externally the BCA reports to the Assistant Regional Director of DEET from Loddon Campase. The BCA has a healthy level of autonomy.

The Program

The BCA offers a **Curriculum that is negotiated** (that is what the student wants to do and when), diverse and practical. The emphasis of the program is both educational and vocational.

Subjects available are as follows:

Maths	Foods
English	Social Skills
Literacy	Woodwork
Environment	Electronics
Outdoor	Social Education

Students have **10 periods a week at Castlemaine Secondary College** and the remainder of their classes at BCA. All students of the BCA begin their day at form meeting in the Library at the Junior Campus, then they are collected by the school van and driven to the BCA. They are returned to their mainstream school for lunch and back to the BCA for their afternoon lessons.

Students also participate in their Enviro-Corps. This year an activity took them to Jan Juc to plant trees as part of the Coastal Revegetation Program. Vanguard Financial services funded a visit to the snow for a day as part of their outdoor education program.

Community Links

The BCA links it's curriculum to the community through Enviro-Corps and the Castlemaine Community Health Centre. Currently the Health Centre offers the school a course in First Aid training and Health and Sex Education. The BCA has strong links to the wider community and it states that these links offer the young people a strong sense of belonging and identity.

The Community Health Centre and the local Council Youth workers work well to support the BCA with issues concerning the young people.

Parental involvement in the school is encouraged, if it is in the best interests of the young person.

Evaluations/Outcomes

The BCA evaluates the success of the program by student, parent and teacher surveys with regards to the student's progress. The results to date show 100% attendance rates, poor behaviour has decreased, students have been 'happy' with the work and many boys have said that they are 'better organised'. Parents have also stated that their children have begun to show more responsibility for their actions and are less likely to lie about their behaviour.

With a bigger van to collect students the Co ordinator believes that the BCA may work better with up to 20 students for a real sense of community and spirit.

Other interesting comments

The Co ordinator believes the BCA would work better if they were **located on campus** with the rest of the school. She feels that the segregation pronounces the difference of the BCA and this makes it more difficult for the young person to return to the mainstream school when they have completed their semester.

GAP PROGRAM

M.E.W.S. Centre

3 Wood Street

Fitzroy 3065

Ph: 9486 9385

Director: Brother Doug Walsh

Background

The core program of the Marist Education Welfare Service (MEWS) is the GAP program. The GAP program began as an outreach service for young people at 'risk' of leaving school early in Catholic and state secondary colleges. Over the years it became increasingly clear to GAP staff that some young people needed other options to mainstream school due to their behaviours, mental health or learning problems. In June 1999 the program relocated from Preston to inner urban Fitzroy and set up the **'transitional'** alternative education program for young people **aged 12-15**. Currently there are 8 young **boys** (the unit can provide for 11) utilising the services of the education program from **various suburbs** of Melbourne.

Philosophy/aims

The GAP program exists to provide early intervention for young people 'at risk'. There is a belief that some young people do not fit into mainstream school life. They find school miserable and teachers find these young people hard to manage. The GAP programs ultimate **aim** is to **reconnect** the young person back to the school or to a new school. The temporary nature of the GAP program is always emphasised and attendance at GAP should be seen as part of a larger plan. GAP does not seek to compete with host schools or be a 'dumping ground' for difficult young people.

The GAP program works in the spirit of the Marist philosophy and works in collaboration with families, schools and other agencies.

Referral/length of stay

Referral to the GAP program is through the young person's school, Community Welfare agencies or Department Human Services. Many of the young people referred to GAP are in substitute care and may have Attention Deficit Disorder or substance abuse issues. Once the referral form is completed GAP staff will arrange a visit to the young persons home to meet the family or the care givers. If all are agreed to continue with the referral assessment will begin. This involves active discussions with all those involved with the young person, including the mainstream school. All going well the young person will begin in the education program with GAP or at least be offered outreach services to support the young person to stay in their school.

A young person is able to stay in the GAP education program for up to **3 terms**. Enrolment is staggered so that young people enter the program at times that best suit their needs.

Funding /management/staffing

The GAP program is **funded by 'DOXA' youth foundation** and auspiced by MEWS. DOXA provides funding of **\$220, 000 per annum** to cover most costs including staffing. All Saints Parish Fitzroy, provides the building Currently staffing arrangements are as follows:

- 1 full time Receptionist/Administrator
- 1 full time Director/teacher
- 1 full time Special education Co ordinator
- 1 full time Social worker (two positions)
- 1 full time Outreach teacher

The GAP program reports to it's own **Advisory Board**, which is comprised of carefully selected representatives from the community such as social workers, lecturers, financial analyst, and Principals.

The program also relies on the enthusiasm and support of a large body of 25 **well trained volunteers**. They are involved in a number of activities including tutoring students with work prepared by the Specialist Education teacher according to the individual needs of the students. The volunteers are also encouraged to be part of extra curricular activities such as the social skills program, the homework program, table tennis, cards, board games, cooking etc.

The Program

Although the program sees it's main focus as behavioural it is committed to providing a **well balanced educational program that meets the needs of the individual**. The program runs over four and a half days. Each young person has a personalised program developed by the Special Education teacher. The young person has a personal tutor to assist them with this work. The morning is divided into three working sessions divided by short **recreational breaks of 15 minutes**. This seems to work for students who have varied experiences of schooling and suffer from low self esteem and short attention spans. The afternoon session consists of rotating activities focused on the C.S.F. in areas of science, food technology, art and sport.

The students are undertaking extended research projects on the topics of their choice. In order to support this work, they are provided with the opportunity for individual excursions, which focus on extending their knowledge and obtaining information for their projects.

Anecdotal observations are recorded regularly in order to enhance student learning and classroom profiles. Curriculum topics, C.S.F standards and students outcomes are recorded to ensure that extensive progress reports can be made available to teachers on the students return to mainstream.

Community links

The program is very committed to working with all those people involved with any young person at any one time. They advocate strongly for the need to support young people inside a **coordinated and case managed framework**. The programs full time social worker is crucial to the success of the young people at GAP as they provide, emotional, and practical support around family issues court appearances, housing issues etc.

The program believes it must continue to increase its networks so as to gain support and recognition for it's activities.

Evaluation/Outcomes

Reflection and evaluation are an important part of daily life at the GAP. There are continuous appraisals of what works or what are the problems. The successful running of the GAP is seen as the **enmeshment of both social work and education disciplines**.

Every month GAP reports to DOXA on how many students they are servicing, what they are doing with them and what are some of the outcomes . The Director keeps the Northern region of DEET up to date with their activities.

Other interesting comments

The GAP genuinely believes that the program success is based on its **'holistic'** approach to working with young people. That the young person's social needs must be met before they will truly be able to achieve in education. The GAP staff work as a team and try very hard with schools families/carers and other community agencies to meet both sets of needs.

BALTARA INTEGRATION UNIT

51 Woolhouse Street

Northcote 3070

ph: 9486 1224

Principal: Denise Clarke

Background

Baltara Integration Unit (BIU) was established in 1992. BIU is a discrete campus and shares some grounds with Croxton Special Primary School. Located in the Merri cluster it is the only campus of Baltara Special School (BSS) that accepts student referrals from schools in DEET Northern and Western regions. **BIU is one of the 4 campuses of BSS**; the other campuses are in Ascot Vale, Maribyrnong and Parkville and provide educational programs to custodial clients of the Department of Human Services (DHS) according to DHS guidelines. The Unit **caters for 7 students** which is seen as the maximum capacity.

Philosophy/aims/and target population

BIU aims to provide an **intensive short-term program for normal intelligence range students with social and educational difficulties** to teach them the skills to integrate back into mainstream school. The Unit caters for students **aged 10-15 years who have displayed "significantly disturbing behaviour"** and who have undergone previous interventions. The school enrolls male and female students but will only take on 2 or more females at a time.

Referral/length of stay

Students are **referred through their home school**. The home school submits a formal referral providing background information outlining specific aims for the student at the Unit. An enrolment committee reviews the application and prepares a recommendation. A staff member from BIU then visits the student at their home school and reports back to the enrolment committee. BIU notifies the home school approximately two weeks in advance of a place becoming available. **Students attend BIU for a maximum of 30 weeks**. There is an initial trial period of four weeks and following review this is extended to six weeks to create a total placement of ten weeks. Following the initial 10-week period reviews are conducted every five weeks. **Length of stay is on average between 18 and 25 weeks**.

Funding/management

DEET funds the whole BSS BIU receives one quarter of the annual funding **usually under \$8,000 for all four campuses**. The Principal is responsible for all four campuses and the Assistant Principal is currently teaching in the Unit. The School Council covers all four campuses and meets twice each term. Meeting sites alternate between Northcote and the three DHS sites.

Staffing arrangements

BIU has **3 full-time staff and 1 part-time teacher aide**. Normally all **three teachers work in the classroom concurrently** and occasionally an aide will be present. Personal development is very important at the Unit particularly concerning behavioural issues. Staff attend lectures at the Royal Children's Hospital on issues such as drug education, sexuality, suicide, and prescribed drug use.

The program

The program **offers 7 of the 8 Key Learning Areas** (LOTE is seen as impractical for students at the Unit). Morning sessions focus on literacy and numeracy. The second session covers health classes and the final afternoon session is the 'hands on' Art and Technology program. The curriculum is designed to be less mentally demanding throughout the day. **BIU views its curriculum not as an end product but as a tool used to achieve behavioural change**. Students are encouraged to develop social skills as they apply themselves to tasks in the curriculum. Students attend the Unit 4 days a week and spend the fifth day (Wednesday) at their home school.

Community links

BIU is directly linked to other schools. They provide student counselling as needed and if students require the assistance of specific services staff will refer parents to agencies. Parents are involved in student's reviews every 5 weeks. **There is an open-door policy on parental visits but mostly parents are grateful for some respite from care duties while students attend the Unit.**

Evaluation/outcomes

Professional reviews of staff are conducted annually by either the Principal or Assistant Principal. The Principal is currently examining new methods for evaluating not only the BIU program but also alternative education programs in general. **BIU has begun using pre- and post-program evaluation sheets completed by the home school. Individual reports are written to objectives for each student every 5 weeks and presented to parents and the home school.** The Unit prepares an annual report and while there are presently few tools for evaluation, the belief is that BIU is positively viewed. Continuing student referrals from schools to the program supports this.

Other interesting comments

The Principal is satisfied with the BIU program and states that through trial and error the program has evolved and the processes and procedures have been refined so that the Unit is now working very effectively. **Benefits to the program from more expensive and varied types of excursions and activities** were acknowledged. 3 key factors presenting challenges to alternative education were:

- * Not enough places for students who need additional assistance
- * No collective evaluation system
- * Lack of understanding in the mainstream of what Teaching Units can offer

Two main points were made in regard to establishing a short-term alternative education setting:

- a) Obtain a clear picture from other settings of the procedures and protocols and learn from the experience of others
- b) Maintain a connection between the mainstream/home school and the student. If there is no relationship with a school it will be difficult to integrate the student back into the mainstream setting and at the end of the program it will be difficult to find a placement. The focus of the unit has to be on 'moving on'.

COBURG TEACHING UNIT

Alva Grove

Coburg 3058

ph: 9354 2600

Coordinator: Sam Lambraia

Background

The Coburg Teaching Unit (CTU) was established in the early 1980s. Previously the Tullamarine Teaching Unit it moved to the Coburg site in 1997. It is a **small program with 8 students** and is linked to Moreland City College. The unit occupies a building on the grounds of the College. This building offers a large space for classes, computers and the library. There is an art space, a small darkroom where students develop their own photographs and a storage room within which students can play table tennis.

Philosophy/aims/and target population

CTU draws on "**positives**" in the program and therefore attempts to maintain a positive approach to education. The Unit seeks to offer young people alternatives to deal with their situations. If a student has not made significant changes at the end of the program the Unit states that there may still be a "kick in later on". CTU enrolls young people **at risk or who "feel stuck"** and have behavioural problems and difficulties accessing curriculum in mainstream schools. Students range from **Years 7-10** and the Unit tries to have a mix of boys and girls, although there are far fewer girls (25%) than boys.

Referral/length of stay

The program at Coburg runs for 1 term (**10 weeks**). To be accepted into the CTU a student must be already enrolled in school. The first point of contact is generally the home school and staff request parents go through the school's welfare coordinator who then contacts the Unit. The second stage is an orientation visit where a student will ideally be accompanied by a welfare coordinator and parent. This leads into an informal discussion to determine why the student wants to attend the Unit. **The CTU generally prefers not to enrol students who have been pressured into attending** as the chance of successful outcomes decrease if the child is forced. Staff from the Unit then visit the school to interview the student and determine that he/she is having difficulty, the student acknowledges problems and is willing to work on them. A placement committee meeting follows this and finally parents attend a full interview to build a more complete picture.

Funding/management

Funded through DEET the Unit receives annual funding based on student numbers. The CTU received \$6,500 for the year 2000 paid quarterly to cover all office materials and supplies. Because the Unit is on-site Moreland City College is allocated some monies to cover bills. Staff rotate various duties every 2-3 years including the position of Co ordinator. The other positions are referrals, budget and finance, curriculum and professional development.

Staffing

The CTU has 4 **full-time staff including the coordinator**. With a current **student population of 8** each teacher mentors 2 students per term. Every subject is 'team taught' with 2 teachers.

The program

Although located in the northern region the Unit enrolls students from the West as well. This is linked to the history of its origins in Tullamarine. The subjects taught at the CTU are:

mathematics
social skills
SOSE.

writing
art/photography

On Wednesdays students return to their home school to attend classes and the CTU teachers visit with them on campus.

Community links

The Unit operates primarily on an **individual needs basis** and so its links with social workers and TAFE's, are drawn upon as the need arises. The CTU has also built up strong links with other schools, welfare agencies, community health services, adolescent health services such as the Royal Children's Hospital, the Austin Hospital's mental health unit and the Salvation Army's Crossroads. In addition, the Unit will invite guest speakers and visit sites relevant to students such as health centres.

Evaluation/outcomes

It is the responsibility of each teacher for 2 contact students. This results in **ongoing and weekly assessment** in the form of reports and meetings with the home school. Once a student leaves the Unit there is a system of formal and informal follow-ups with the young people at 3 and month intervals. Staff often receive feedback on students from the school. The Unit must provide reports to the regional management committee on a student's 'progress and track students' destination following their time at CTU.

The **regional body has also conducted on site reviews every 3 years**. As a result of these follow-ups it has sometimes been necessary to change a student's placement. Many students attending the Unit have not previously experienced success and have low self-esteem. As a result of the wide variety of activities offered in the program the students can usually find something that they are competent in. The Unit enables students to 'access success' and helps them develop strategies for dealing with issues and difficulties.

Other interesting comments

The CTU coordinator suggested that an alternative educational site should be centrally funded and accessible to all students. The coordinator noted the importance of longer-term placement opportunities for students such as community schools. It was felt that **sometimes a 10-week program isn't long enough to deal with the issues presented by students** and instead alternative education sites can be seen as 'dumping grounds' for problem adolescents.

The 'user pays' system and lack of resources for students in need were viewed as negatively impacting on the provision of education for students outside of mainstream settings.

COLLINGWOOD ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

**162 Wellington St
Collingwood 3066
ph: 9419 3816
Principal: Chris Astley**

Background

Collingwood Alternative School (CAS) opened in 1972. It is located in the inner Melbourne suburb of Collingwood in the Merri cluster and is an annexe of Collingwood College. The school offers a strong academic curriculum and has a current enrolment of **25 students**.

Philosophy/aims and target population

CAS believes that all young people **deserve an education** and that they should all feel safe and secure at school. A **'team approach'** is seen as an indispensable part of the school's organisation. The school **aims** to provide students with educational opportunities to foster self-development as well as strengthening their contributions as members of the community. CAS enrolls at risk students from **13-17 years** of age suffering social, emotional, psychological or learning difficulties. They may often have records of truancy, and Human Services or police involvement.

Referral/length of stay

CAS tends to take on most applicants who are interested in attending the school. The **referral** process consists of a written application, interview and when appropriate contact with the previous school. Young people from anywhere in Melbourne are accepted and the most common forms of referral come from word of mouth, schools, Human Services or Juvenile Justice and other alternative education units. The program runs from a minimum of **6 months up to 3 years**.

Funding/management

The school is funded by **DEET** and received \$31,404 for the year 2000. That is \$7,851 per semester. The Principal is responsible for the budget and performing all official duties however the team environment amongst the staff leads to a great deal of flexibility in terms of the roles and duties of each teacher. Collingwood College is the host school and is the main school body external to CAS. Collingwood College school council covers all of its annexes including CAS.

Staffing arrangements

There are **4.2 full-time teachers at CAS**. The school has access to the administration at Collingwood College as there are no administrative staff. Daily administrative duties such as answering the phones are the responsibility of the teachers themselves. The school currently has no part-time or sessional staff, but has plans to hire a part-time teacher aide for 4 hours a week in the near future. 'Team teaching' is the norm for morning sessions with the younger and less able students with 2 teachers per group of 7 students. For all other classes there is **one teacher per 7 students**. The school has a Professional Development budget for staff.

The program

The CAS program has a **strong academic and activity based learning curriculum**. CAS is hoping to improve students' levels of literacy and numeracy, encourage them into wanting to attend school, give them positive experiences of different learning styles and provide them with qualifications they would usually not gain in mainstream schools (VCE for example). CAS aims to move students into further courses or training when they leave the school.

Key learning area classes (with the exception of language) are offered in conjunction with a VET Module.

The morning program focuses on literacy, numeracy, general studies and Planning for Employment and Training (PET). The later morning and afternoon sessions are the more activity oriented electives such as art, sport and woodwork. (See Appendix 15, for types of Programs available at CAS).

Community links

CAS receives a lot of support from the Save the Children foundation, which has in the past funded kitchen appliances. The school also maintains strong ties with the Police and is trying to run more High Challenge camps. **Students participate in the local community** through the music program, performing at community festivals and other schools. One of the teachers acts as the student welfare officer and liaises with the regional psychologist whose regular visits. Parents are not involved in the school's daily operations, as this has repeatedly been problematic in the past. Parents are involved in goal setting with their child and the school every 6 months.

Evaluation/outcomes

CAS maintains a **database of student progress**. This information is collected from the academic testing process, anecdotal feedback and follow-ups on students' progress once they have left the school. Parents receive a student report each semester and the PET program comes with its own evaluation procedure for staff and students. CAS was part of the alternative/ancillary settings review conducted by DEET. Included as part of Collingwood College's triennial charter priorities CAS submits a review for the annual report. CAS believes that it is **successful in meeting its objectives** for a number of reasons:

- small size of the school
- consistency in teaching and discipline which stems from the supportive 'team' ethic amongst staff
- solid structure of the school's operation, within which staff creatively work according to the budget

Other interesting comments

Because of the **small size of the student** population at CAS the school is able to effectively deal with and engage difficult students who are suffering in mainstream schools. If the number of students enrolled at CAS increased, it was suggested that it may be more difficult for the school to have such a positive effect on students. It was noted that because many alternative education sites have developed historically catering for a need in the region often there is no clear plan for curriculum and funding models. Additionally a 'user pays' model of alternative education was seen to give little security to programs and inhibited their growth and development.

To run a successful and effective alternative education setting there needs to be a **'bottom line' in terms of the stability of facilities and staff**. A program that is totally dependent on grants for its funding will not be able to run a consistent curriculum. Also of importance for any alternative educational settings are the expectations of the larger mainstream schools, which enrol their most difficult students and often expect clear results. Producing these expected outcomes often proves challenging.

KENSINGTON COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

405 Racecourse Road, Kensington 3031

ph: 9376 1953

Principal: Stewart Andrews

Background

Kensington Community High School (KCHS) was established in 1975 and is located in the inner western suburb of Kensington within 5 km of the city centre. The school moved to the historic Newmarket Saleyards site in 1989 and the student intake began to grow to include students 'at risk' of early school leaving from most of the Northern and Western suburbs of Melbourne. KCHS is an independent government secondary school and offers a curriculum for students from **Years 7-12**. There are currently just over **90 students enrolled**.

Philosophy/aims/and target population

KCHS sees its role as providing an educational setting for students who have become dissatisfied with mainstream schooling. The school aims to support young people to **continue participation in education** and/or training, empower students to increase their self-esteem, foster resiliency and develop skills to deal with often difficult life circumstances and to set achievable goals for their future. KCHS targets students from the **Northern and Western suburbs** who are having difficulty in mainstream settings and who present risk factors both behavioural and academic. The school also encourages independent students and young mothers to enrol.

Referral/length of stay

KCHS enrolls from anywhere in the North west regions of Melbourne and 12% of the student population are local to the area. KCHS takes enrolments throughout the year and students are **referred** through their school or various agencies. The referral process begins by screening prospective students for literacy and numeracy levels. An interview with the student and parents, or other care providers such as a youth worker, is then conducted. This assists the school in evaluating the needs of the student to see what the school can offer and to determine the impact the student will have in the school. The decision to accept a placement is left to the student which is the first stage in empowering them with a sense of choice and control over their lives.

Funding/management

KCHS receives **DEET funding through the standard formula of all government secondary colleges**. The school receives approximately \$48,000 for its programs. Teachers' wages are funded centrally through DEET. KCHS's hierarchy is similar to that of any secondary college. The positions of Principal, Assistant Principal, and Level 2 teacher form the top tier of internal school management. According to the Principal, there are not many hierarchical positions. The State education system is the main management body external to the school as well as the Regional Office and Regional Principal Consultant.

Staffing arrangements

KCHS has **11.6 teaching staff and 4.7 part-time non-teaching staff**. There is also a 0.76 teaching aide. All students belong to a pastoral care group which have specific teachers who support their progress and when necessary are in contact with parents. The pastoral care groups are divided into 3 levels - junior, middle and senior. Each group has a maximum of 30-35 students and on average there are 3.6 teachers per group (roughly 1-10 ratio). The school has a Professional Development (PD) budget and 'whole school' PD is also provided involving all staff.

The program

The majority of students studying VCE at the school are aiming to move into some form of

traineeship or training program. KCHS provides classes in all Key Learning Areas (KLA). The school seeks to improve student achievement in all KLA and to ensure that the curriculum meets the academic and social needs of the students. **Improved student performance in literacy and numeracy** is a priority of the curriculum. The school also has camping and outdoor activity programs. Because a great number of the young people at KCHS are 'non-attenders' and 'school refusers' the school tries to run programs that are enjoyable and engaging for students.

Community links

KCHS is visited regularly by a local youth worker and a local community nurse this is a long-standing arrangement. Other community groups are involved in the delivery of programs for students such as the Salvation Army's Crossroads. The school has an **in-house student welfare officer**. Parental involvement in the school is quite limited. While there is a small, committed group, the school admittedly finds it difficult to get parents involved. Many of the students have difficult home environments; last year for example 28% of students were not living with their parents. Another contributing factor to low parental involvement is the parents' own often negative experiences of education.

Evaluations/outcomes

KCHS produces an **annual report** and provides a **school charter to the school council every 3 years** for discussion. The school also undergoes triennial reviews and an independent auditor audits school finances. The school believes the success of the program stems from its ability to engage students and its caring supportive learning environment. The school claims to have a level of 'connectedness' between students and teachers not found in the mainstream. On a wider level the school is "intensely connected" with students' family and carers and is often in daily communication.

Other interesting comments

At KCHS there is a very specific focus on students making choices in their lives. Two thirds of the students attend the school because of learning issues that have often led to behavioural issues. Kensington is for many of its students an option to avoid expulsion in the mainstream. The school maintains that students need to positively choose to attend the school otherwise they become resentful and a burden to the school.

The KCHS Principal saw a number of positive aspects to current alternative education. He believed that the present state government was indicating its support for education of young people and that this support could be seen on a system wide level. The number of good programs currently on offer from alternative education providers was also noted. This indicated that schools were reflecting on what they can do for young people.

When establishing an alternative educational setting it was recommended that the length of stay for students be thoroughly considered as this would affect the degree of 'connectedness' for students with their peers and host school. Initial funding of an alternative education setting should be secured on a triennial basis regardless of fluctuating student numbers. Short-term projects will initially have difficulty attesting to the effectiveness and benefits of the program.

NUMBER ONE

1 Gleadell St, Richmond 3121

ph: 9427 0637

Coordinator: Terry Cunliffe

Background

Starting out as the Richmond Boys' High School in 1992, the Richmond based program Number One began operating in 1998. Centrally located just off Bridge Rd, Number One occupies the ground floor of a small brick building that opens onto the street. There **are currently 27 students enrolled** at Number One, two third boys. There is one main classroom in the middle of the building with a second, portable classroom in the rear garden. There is a kitchen and lounge area for the students as well as a computer room. Collingwood College is the host school and the students come from **all Melbourne regions**.

Philosophy/aims/and target population

Number One sees its role as helping develop successful outcomes for students in employment and training. There are **4 school values**: Learning, Independence, Respect for people and Community Involvement. Number One aims to attract young people who don't fit into mainstream schooling and to provide education and support for young people with social and behavioural issues. Students at Number One range in **age from 14-17** and the staff cater to each student's needs and work toward individual goals for achieving success. (See Appendix 14 for Number One's mission, values, responsibilities and right)

Referral/length of stay

Number One enrolls students from a **variety of schools in Melbourne**. Students are referred through Student Welfare Co ordinators, regional Guidance Officers, The Island, and through word of mouth. To enrol at Number One students fill out a Collingwood College enrolment form with their parent or guardian and complete a 2-week trial period. The program runs for a **minimum of 6 months up to 2 years** depending on individual needs.

Funding/management

Number One is funded by **DEET on a per student basis on audit day**. The unit received **\$24,000** this year for bills and all overheads. **Collingwood College pays staff wages separately**. The school coordinator is in charge of most key administrative and official duties as well as teaching along with the two other teaching staff. The school answers directly to Collingwood College but stress that day to day operations are fairly independent.

Staffing arrangements

There is a base requirement at Number One **of 2 full-time teachers and one full-time teacher to 16 students**. With a current student population of **27 Number One has three full-time staff** and no part-time or sessional staff. With such a small number of staff the program is organised so that when two members are teaching, the third works in the office. The staff have used allocated monies for training but state that with such limited financial resources they must carefully choose what further training they attend. Finding the time to take part in training is also a significant factor for staff.

The program

Number One provides a **'flexible' full-time program** for young people not fitting into mainstream education. Students attend a **3-day program and spend an additional day at TAFE**, and another day in work placement for the duration of the course.

The three main academic subjects offered are:

numeracy/mathematics

language (English)

Preparation for Employment and Training (PET).

The school day runs from 9:30 am to 2:45 pm. Students are not in attendance on Wednesday afternoons and Fridays - a work experience day.

Community links

Number One encourages **visits from professionals in fields and services** relevant to the students. This keeps them informed of community developments. Those students from the local area find this information most useful.

Evaluation/outcomes

Evaluation at Number One relies on **feedback from the students**. Staff look to those students who have been successful to determine what works and what doesn't. The Collingwood College **school council also evaluates the unit's progress**. Teachers at Number One are encouraged to make the distinction between a student's behaviour and personality, and to provide positive reinforcement. The unit strives to work as a team while catering to individual differences and abilities. Students are allowed and encouraged to take responsibility for themselves. The extent to which students achieve this objective is used as an indicator of the program's success.

Other interesting comments

Number One identified the co ordination of support services for young people an important issue for alternative educational settings. Another key issue was for programs to have **assured funding and to strengthen their links with industry** when vocational courses are offered.

Funding, students and staff numbers were the three most important issues identified by Number One's staff. As these three factors are all related it was suggested that organisers consider what they will offer in the program and the number of students that are assured, of enrolment. Funding should reflect these figures. It is important to decide whether the **program will be short or long-term and where the students will come from**. If the program is to offer vocational courses, links with industry and workplace visits should be conducted in order to give students a look at workplace settings and help them decide what interests them. It was also stressed that the 'rules' for alternative educational settings should not be the same as those of the mainstream.

SYDNEY ROAD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

350 Sydney Rd

Brunswick 3056

ph: 9489 0611

Principal: Lyn Scott

Background

Sydney Road Community School (SRCS) is a small government secondary school that opened in 1972. It is **open to local students** who live in the Brunswick-Coburg area within a 7-8 km radius of the school. It offers a curriculum from Year 7 to Year 12. **Maximum capacity is 100** and there are currently 90 students enrolled with an even mix of male and female students. The main school building has an open design plan and provides a central focus for the entire school. The school provides more personal/individual support than mainstream schools for students experiencing personal or academic difficulties.

Philosophy/aims/and target population

The school tries to remain **small** and **aims** to achieve both 'measurable' outcomes such as academic success and employment and less easily quantifiable outcomes such as a sense of self-worth, meeting one's potential, participation in a learning environment and a community. The school encourages **democratic involvement** in its daily operations and strives to ensure that its organisation and curriculum does not work to the disadvantage of any group. The school also seeks to **foster self-respect** and **respect for other people** and encourages those at the school to try to "look after" and "take care of" everyone else. Students from **Years 7-12** are accepted from the local area only, in order to strengthen the atmosphere of community at the school. (See Appendix 13 for SRCS's list of principles)

Referral/length of stay

The school provides a complete secondary curriculum for 6 years. Prospective students are interviewed at the school to determine how they would fit into the school community. On some occasions students are assessed as not suited to the school community and are then put on a waiting list.

Funding/management

SRCS is funded through **DEET in the same way as a mainstream secondary school**. The school tries to run in a co-operative fashion and all staff are involved in the decision making process. The **school council consists of 4 parent members, 3 DEET members, 1 co-opted community member, and up to 3 co-opted student members**. The School Council meets once a month, is the main decision-making body of the school and follows DEET guidelines. The regional office also supervises school operations.

Staffing arrangements

The school has **6 full-time and 6 part-time staff**. There is one teacher per class and class sizes vary from 15 students in the first two years and up to 18 in later years. The staff are positively encouraged to undertake further training and professional development. All teachers attend staff meetings twice a week where specific items and projects are discussed. Votes are rarely used at these meetings to decide matters, instead decisions are made by general agreement.

The program

The **school curriculum for Years 7-10**, offers classes from each Key Learning Area and are seen as follows:

English	LOTE
Mathematics	Science
Health & Physical Education	SOSE
Technology	The Arts.

For Years 11-12 the VCE timetable is run jointly with Brunswick Secondary College to provide a wider variety of subject choices. A key focus of the school is its music program that is a core subject for Years 7 & 8 and an elective for Years 9-12. Camps, activities and sports programs encourage school socialisation and provide 'fun'. The school has an open-access computer room giving students access to the Internet. Students with **special learning and/or social needs** are identified and supported through a variety of methods such as aides, modified work requirements, extended VCE and specialised resources.

Community links

The school has strong links with the nearby **Salvation Army and shares buses, a kitchen and gymnasium**. Once a week a school counsellor (a DEET psychologist) who also refers students to outside services and provides teachers with information on services and general advice visits the school. The school has a **Student Welfare Co ordinator** who provides extra support for students and liaises between groups and individuals within the school. Beyond participation in the school council parental involvement in the school may take the form of fundraising, voluntary assistance for special needs students and informal visits. Many students at secondary level are reportedly "not always keen" for their parents to be very involved.

Evaluation/outcomes

Internal evaluation is performed through descriptive assessments, staff meetings and level group meetings. Staff obtain feedback from students and adopt a pro active approach to keep abreast of changes in the school dynamics. External evaluation is in the form of an **annual report** and triennial reviews conducted by DEET. The school Principal suggests that statistical evaluation methods are not entirely complimentary to the holistic approach adopted by SRCS and other alternative education providers.

Other interesting comments

SRCS seeks to attract students who have chosen to attend by choice to **avoid the perception that it is a 'dumping ground'** for bigger schools. The Principal said that it was important for more schools in the mainstream system to look at the ways in which they teach and deal with students and suggested that a more holistic approach could be adopted whereby schools focus on the progress of the **"whole child"**.

It was suggested that in setting up an alternative education site there should be a focus on **establishing something positive to attract young people such as a music or drama program**. This will help increase the instances of students positively choosing to attend a school. A variety of offerings both in curriculum and activities were also identified as highly important.

THE ISLAND

186 Queens Parade

North Fitzroy 3068

ph: 9489 0611

Coordinator: Anne Broadribb

Background

The Island Work Education and Training Unit is located in North Fitzroy at the southern end of the busy commercial hub of Queens Parade. The Island has been in operation since 1975 and is one of the three annexes of Collingwood College. The program currently caters to an **average of 48 students** focussing on getting them "**job ready**" through a predominantly vocational based curriculum. The school accepts students who are enrolled at the Collingwood College as well as other young people from **all over Melbourne**.

Philosophy/aims/and target population

The Island sets out to instil in its students a **sense of responsibility** and to create an **environment of success**. Students and teachers at the Island share an **employee-employer relationship** thus assisting students with a school to work transition. In this way the students are able to experience a sense of workplace and to learn four key elements of successful and ongoing employment:

Reliability

Punctuality

Taking instructions

Giving instructions

Young people at the Island range in **age from 15 to 18 years** and have either dropped out of mainstream schooling or are in the process of leaving. Those accepted into the program display a "**burning desire to find work**" and are given a "clean slate" when they begin so as to concentrate on progress and success. Young people who are "severe cases" in terms of behaviour or disability are generally not enrolled in the program as it is perceived unlikely to be of great benefit to such kids and may instead reinforce a sense of failure.

Referral/length of stay

Students are either **referred** directly through Collingwood College or through their school Principal, welfare officer, human services, parents or have heard about the program through friends and approach the Island on their own. However, someone either usually accompanies a student either from their school or family, to represent them in the enrolment process. After successfully completing a 4-day trial period at the Island a student is then accepted into the program **running from 6-12 months**. After this time they ideally move into employment or back into school.

Funding/management

The program receives **90% of its funding from DEET totalling \$220,000 annually**. Four of the teaching staff receive their wages from the central payroll the other five (unqualified teachers who have expertise in a field) are paid through the coordinator from an allocation of \$160,000. A foreman who handles the program's occupational health and safety compliances supports the coordinator. The workshop and teaching staff are next in the management ladder and finally the students who answer directly to their teacher or workshop supervisor.

Staffing arrangements

The Island has **9 full-time staff, including 4 qualified teachers and 5 workshop instructors** in addition there are 3 part-time staff who work with the program from 1-2 days a week. With a total of 48 students **groups are kept to a maximum of 8 and one teacher supervises each group**. Workshop instructors all hold qualifications in their fields and are encouraged to keep up to date with relevant workplace developments.

The program

The program offers marginalised and 'at risk' students the opportunity to gain work skills through a variety of workshops:

building & construction	visual arts
catering	computer studies
woodwork	sport outdoor recreation
mechanics	literacy & numeracy
metalwork	music

All activities performed by the students are given a 'real' context for example students perform all on-site building and renovations, prepare the daily meals, and work on actual cars.

The Island runs a **9-day fortnight**, providing students with a 'Student Day Off' in lieu of the extra hours worked during the week. This is intended for making time available to students to attend to personal matters.

Community links

The Island has strong links with industry through its **off-site activities and work placements** for students of the program. The Island also maintains strong links with the police through camps, the use of a police gym and general social activities.

Evaluation/outcomes

The Island judges its success on the **success of its students** both during their time at the unit and their subsequent development and progress in placements or back at school. Staff review and evaluate the program at the start and end of each term and funding is accorded relative to student enrolments on audit day.

Other interesting comments

The unit coordinator suggested improvements to the program could be achieved through extending the premises particularly the kitchen to allow students to complete a Certificate 2 in Hospitality, thus increasing their employment options. It was also suggested that the automotive workshop would need review in future to deal with developments in automotive computerisation.

The Island advised that it was important **to start off small and to assure guaranteed funding**. Particularly relevant for vocational programs was proximity to business districts and distance from schools. Additionally for vocational programs the coordinator suggested that with an initial student population of 8 a building and construction course could be offered in which the students could help build or renovate the site. After this 8 more students could be enrolled for a nutrition course that taught cooking, then a third course in sport and recreation could be added and the school could keep expanding in this way.

ST AUGUSTINE'S EDUCATION AND TRAINING

27-23 Oxford Street

Whittington

Geelong 3219

Ph: 5248 2557

Principal: Brother Russell Peters

Background

St Augustine's orphanage for children was established in 1857. Their school program was registered in 1904. Today St Augustine's, under the auspice of Mackillop Family Services runs a **plethora of specialist education programs** around the Victorian regional city of Geelong. There are **three on site programs for primary and secondary students and four outreach programs**. They are listed as follows:

- St Helen's Special School (5-12 years)
- The School (12-14 years)
- New Street (14-15 years)
- Education Mobile Unit (5-16 years outreach)
- Youth Ed-venture Program (12-16 years outreach)
- Second Chance Program (10-14 years)
- Educational Youth Support Worker (liaison and support to young people in residential care, with high educational needs)

All programs target those young people who **are not coping with education in mainstream** settings and are 'at risk' of leaving school early or have left. The vast range of options offers young people a continuum of educational care to best suit their needs.

Philosophy/aim/referral

St Augustine's is part of a **Catholic Welfare Agency**. They abide by the '**spirit and philosophy of the gospel**' and **work hard to foster hope in every person by wakening them to an appreciation of their self worth**. The young people, who come to their school programs, are invited into the community by offering them **acceptance**. They aim to enable them to restore balance in their lives, help them to become stronger in self esteem and help them to take responsibility of their own behaviour. The Principal suggests that teaching and role modelling **respect for yourself and others** is paramount to the success of the programs.

The programs are **flexible and creative** and enable each young person to experience success both academically and in the skills needed to become a safe, confident and competent member of the society in which they live.

All programs have similar referral pathways. **Most referrals are from schools**, community agencies or parents. For the 'on site' educational programs the referrals are generally from schools. The schools must agree to work collaboratively with the specific program to ensure that if re integration is possible that it will happen smoothly.

The Programs

The following offers a brief summary of the 7 distinct school programs offered by St Augustine's:

St Helen's Special School (on site)

St Helen's staff create **individual programs for each young person** based on the Victorian Curriculum Standards Framework. Individual programs reflect individual circumstances. The guidelines that are followed for these programs require a curriculum that:

- is broad and comprehensive
- is relevant to the student's intellectual, social and emotional needs
- is part of the continuum of life
- offers opportunity, challenge and choices
- encourages independence
- values independent learning styles
- provides for different rates of learning
- enhances the student's self esteem, worth, identity and dignity
- provides a range of opportunities for individual and group learning skills
- provides a broad range of experiences
- is realistic, achievable and has clearly stated goals

These guidelines are used as a focus when activities are planned whether it is mathematics or a fishing trip to Barwon Heads.

The School (on site)

The School provides a learning program for up to **12 young people (12-15 years)** who have been excluded from attending main stream education. It is different from regular school. Attendance may be flexible (minimum 20 hours per week) and is negotiated by staff, family/carers and the young person. Most stay for up to 18 months before they are able to move onto other programs or return to mainstream education. The school is funded by **DEET for 4 full time teachers at a cost of \$250,000** per annum.

The key element for each young person is the '**pathway planning process**' which is an individualised program involving continual goal setting, evaluation and communication between the young person and others who may be involved in the young persons life.

The 'school' offers a variety of learning experiences in the following core learning areas:

Academic Education

numeracy
literacy
physical Education
environmental studies

Outdoor Education

marine wilderness
recreation
model making
camps/excursions

Life Skills education

cooking
basic numeracy/literacy
personal development
health, hygiene & sexuality
social skills

The 'school' also uses specific behaviour management techniques to develop and maintain a safe and happy environment including time out, strategic ignoring, positive reinforcement.

New Street (on site)

New street is not like a normal school. It provides **a transition to work education program for 12-16 young people (14-15 years)** who have attempted to access most other programs. It targets some of the '**toughest**' young people who may have been absent from mainstream education for up to two years. For most returning to mainstream education is not an option. New Street offers accredited learning through Certificate of General Education for Adults (C.G.E.A.) and Certificate of Workplace Education (C.W.E.).

New street operates from 8.30 am-3.15 pm Monday to Friday. A **full time program at New Street is equivalent to three full days** (the other two days may be used for work experience). The program is funded through grants from what was The **Office of Youth Affairs at a cost per annum of \$250,000**, for 4 full time staff (1 youth worker, 1 trainer and two teachers).

New Street 'open learning' activities include the following:

Surfboard factory

Marine Wilderness program

Woodcraft	Hospitality
Metal Work	Creative
Technics	Physical
Landscaping/horticulture	Work place Education
Cars program	Life Skills development

Education Mobile Unit (outreach and on site)

The Education Mobile Unit (EMU) provides outreach support and school withdrawal program (1 day per week) to those 5-16 year olds (primary and secondary students) having difficulties with their education. It grew out of the **ever increasing waiting list for vacancies at St Helen's and The School**. EMU works with school staff and young people to develop intervention strategies aimed at maintaining potential early school leavers at mainstream school.

Human Services and Regional Youth Services Grants fund the program **for \$230,000 per annum**. This budget provides for 2 full time teachers (primary and secondary), 2 youth workers (primary and secondary) and 2 .6EFT activities worker- (primary and secondary). This provides services to **7 primary students and 7 secondary students**.

The EMU program offers opportunities for students to participate in activities related to their interests and life situations. EMU offers a **low student to staff ratio focusing on small group work** and opens avenues for positive relationships. Most young people remain in Mainstream education, others have direct access to other St Augustine's programs or other alternative education programs.

EMU tries to assist young people by:

Providing a range of activities to promote self esteem and self worth

- Providing opportunities to gain levels in the C.G.E.A. or to obtain tutoring
- Assisting young people to become confident in pursuing further learning
- Encouraging positive involvement in community based activities
- Offering positive life experience
- Working with schools/teachers to promote a positive and co operative school environment

The curriculum on offer includes the following areas:

Numeracy and Literacy (CGEA)	Arts
Recreation and Leisure	Educational Opportunities
Fitness program	Life skills
Other Activities	Case Management

Youth Ed-Venture Program (outreach)

The Youth Ed-Venture Program (YEP) is an outreach educational adventure program for young people who are at present excluded from educational programs. It targets high risk adolescents from the Department of Human services who are generally involved with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

The program is funded through **DHS for \$130,000 per annum**. This provides for a teacher and a youth worker who operate a 4 day per week program for up to **5 adolescents**.

The program utilises **active learning approaches to re-connect young people** with education and training options. It is believed that adventure therapy and active learning approaches to activities maximises young peoples learning opportunities. Those who participate in the program also have input into selecting the activities that are offered.

Participants have the opportunity to return to mainstream education have a direct pathway into other

programs in St Augustine's Education Centre or to other alternative education programs. YEP involves the young people in an **educational case-plan** to reach educational goals and provides follow up support to young people exiting the program. The YEP program operates from 9 am - 3 pm and includes the following activities:

Numeracy and Literacy (CGEA)

Recreation and Leisure (marine wilderness program, fitness program, other activities ie rock climbing)

Life Skills (personal development, sexuality, cooking, self esteem etc)

Education Opportunities (accessing further training, computer skills, exploring other education, etc)

Second Chance (outreach)

The second chance program is a **very new early intervention initiative funded through brokerage monies from the School Focused Youth Service Project** for the Bellarine and North Region. For \$20,000 over a 6 month period, St Augustine's has employed a teacher full time to work with young people, their families and schools to facilitate entry into mainstream schools. The program is an outreach model which targets those young people 10-14 years who are disengaged from school because of long term suspension, expulsion, long periods of absenteeism or truancy.

Often these young people are from **years 7 or 8 and have fallen through the 'educational net'** in the transition from primary to secondary school. Many of these young people have parents who were school refusers. Many have depressed parents. Consequently the outreach work is family inclusive.

Educational Support Worker (ESW) (outreach)

This program employs a full time youth worker **who provides intensive co ordination, liaison and support to young people living in residential care with high educational needs**. This outreach position is funded by Human Services for Children in Residential Care Program (CIRC)..

The ESW relies on building relationships with young people that are based on respect.

Other interesting comments

All St Augustine's Programs are accountable to their funding bodies. Regular reports on outcomes are expected in all the educational programs. St Augustine's would like to see more money spent on evaluating their programs. Over the years grants have provided some funds to conduct comprehensive evaluations of programs.

The Principal of St Augustine's Education and Training Program is keen to see resources put into really early intervention work; that is a **specialist Kindergarten unit for pre school children**. He genuinely believes that the earlier you work with some of these young people the better chance you have for successful outcomes.

LYNALL HALL

8 Gleadell Street

Richmond 3121

Ph: 9428 2722

Principal: Alex Walker

Background

Lynall Hall was first established in the late 1970s during the height of alternative school development in Australia. It is a **wholly independent secondary school** and offers a secondary curriculum in accordance with Victorian standards. The school moved to the inner city suburb of Richmond in 1994 and is currently in the process of considering relocating to another larger site nearby. The school has an enrolment of **80 students who come from all over Melbourne**. The school is housed in a 3-storey building with class spaces on the top and ground floors.

Philosophy/aims/and target population

The primary objective of Lynall Hall is to **"get kids to come to school"**. The school seeks to provide students with opportunities for education and access to success. The fundamental principle at Lynall Hall is to make students **"inclusive" in the school**. The school is open to students from **Years 7 to 12**. The most important issues for Lynall Hall students are that they feel safe and secure at school, that they have freedom and that they are treated in a reasonable and 'normal' manner. The majority of students have had poor experiences of education and the school aims to turn this experience around through positive and successful learning. Lynall Hall offers a place for any student who does not fit into mainstream education. **Social and behavioural issues are particularly relevant to the student population.**

Referral/length of stay

Lynall Hall runs a secondary school program and there are **no limits on the length of stay** for each student. The school does ask that if a student is leaving that they inform the school so that other enrolments can be taken. Enrolment is conducted through interviews and new students are permitted to start at the school only at the beginning of each term. **Referrals** come mainly from youth workers familiar with the school. Other referring bodies include secondary school Principals, the and the courts.

Funding/management

The school is funded through **DEET and receives the same amount per student as any state secondary school**. Funding is determined on student numbers each year by census. Management within the school is based on a **'consensus' model**. There is a weekly school business meeting conducted with the Principal and staff, and a daily morning meeting to discuss curriculum and student issues. There is also a weekly meeting with students and staff that has a prearranged agenda enabling students to gain a sense of participation and responsibility. External management is in the form of a school council consisting of parents, teachers, community members and the school Principal.

Staffing arrangements

There are **9.2 full-time staff at Lynall Hall**. There is a 0.2 music teacher and 1.8 office staff (including library technician). There is a school guidance officer and a student welfare teacher who are in house and a 4-day a week SFYS financed youth worker. Teachers are very involved in the management of the school and the direction of the program. There is also an emphasis among the **staff to include and engage with students.**

The program

The school curriculum works to VCE and Curriculum Studies Framework (CSF). Through other

programs run by the school there is an additional attempt to engage students in learning and build up their self-esteem. This is primarily achieved by offering activities that students can safely have a go at without worrying about 'failing'. Additional courses include photography, a metal and woodwork program, the school circus and external activities such as a recent solar car construction competition. **The program is set up to challenge the students in a way that they have an opportunity to succeed.** Because of its size the school is able to teach to more individual differences and look at their 'wider' education in terms of life skills.

Community links

Lynall Hall has links with the local Yarra Council, local primary and secondary schools, various youth agencies and the Police. The Ardoch Youth Foundation helps the school in running programs and also chases financial support and seeks volunteers. **Parental involvement is encouraged as much as possible however it is not at a very high level.** The diversity of suburbs from which enrolled students come means that parents are scattered all over Melbourne and this makes it difficult for the school to generate a consistent level of involvement. While Lynall Hall is a community school the meaning of community now refers more to the school itself than to the area surrounding it.

Evaluation/outcomes

The school evaluates its program and performance through feedback from parents and students and continuous discussion amongst staff. In this way **review and change evolves to meet the students' needs.** Lynall Hall provides DEET with annual and triennial reviews and a school charter. An annual census requires detailed information from the school for review. Making the **students an inclusive part of the school** was identified as the key to Lynall Hall's success. Students are given a sense of responsibility within the school and success is determined by more than the curriculum alone.

Other interesting comments

The biggest issue facing the school at the moment is the facility itself. The layout is such that the Principal's office and the general office are at a distance from the classrooms and the students. It was felt that it would be better for the school if it were able to **attract more students who actually wanted to be in school** but who were looking for an alternative to the mainstream settings. It was stressed that all schools need to make an effort to make students "inclusive in the school".

The Principal of Lynall Hall was supportive of a new alternative school setting being established and felt that it was something all areas should do. He advised that when establishing a new alternative educational setting there ought to be a clear understanding of the expectations and desired outcomes

6. Recommendations for further action

These recommendations have been formulated from the information found in the literature review, and the site interviews. The recommendations provide a summary of factors to be considered in the development and implementation of an alternative education site for secondary school students ‘at risk’. This list is by no means exhaustive or exclusive.

1) Before being established

For the project reference group to:

- Conduct a regional analysis of student need for an alternative education site in Banyule and Nillumbik.(Suggest focus group research with SWC and year co ordinators for all State and Independent Secondary Schools in these municipalities)
- Carry out a local mapping exercise of what is currently available to students through education in mainstream settings or other off site programs to determine where the gaps are.
- Consult with school staff and students, TAFES, Universities, Living and Learning centres, welfare/health agencies, job networks and local governments and seek to form partnerships for the purpose of developing and establishing an alternative site.
- Seek funding of \$300,000.00 per annum from sources such as DEET, DHS and Philanthropic trusts/ foundations, which can be secured for 3 years, for the operation of the alternative education program.
- To lobby the Federal government for the development of a national policy statement and provisions for the future of early school leavers and ‘at risk’ students.
- To lobby for further funding from the State and Federal governments to expand and/or create a variety of alternative education programs for ‘at risk’ young people.

2) When established the alternative site should:

- Work closely within the frameworks and recommendations suggested by the “Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria” and the “Public Education in the Next Generation” reports.(that is to **consolidate** employment, education and training pathways for young people through **integrated** networks)
- Have a clearly identified and stated target group. The aims and objectives of the alternative education site to be clearly and specifically articulated to determine the model and direction of the school.
- Offer a variety of exit points for students ie to TAFE, other alternative sites mainstream schools, work apprenticeships etc.

3) Management

- That the alternative site be directly managed by a host school arrangement (ie Diamond Valley Secondary College or Eltham High School)
- That an Advisory Committee be established to oversee the operations of the alternative setting and this Committee include; Coordinator of the site, Host School Principal, staff representatives from the setting, student support staff and other co-opted members as required
- The Coordinator of the setting will form strong links and liaise regularly with representatives of the funding body, school Principal, school council and advisory body

4) Evaluation/accountability

- A strategic plan be developed for three years which outlines programs, strategies, goals and budgets
- An annual general report on the operations of the setting be produced
- 'On going' evaluation through action research.
- A tracking process to monitor the progress of students who have exited the program be developed

5) Staffing

- That staff are chosen for their personal and professional qualities to work with 'at risk' young people
- That the staffing arrangements include teachers and youth workers/social workers to enhance the holistic approach to educating young people
- That due consideration be given to teacher, student ratios (ie 1 teacher to 5-9 students)
- That staffing arrangements are secure and stable for the life cycle of programs

6) Characteristics of the school

- That the unit be located 'off site' in a setting that does not have the 'hallmarks' of mainstream education, close to transport, referring schools and the wider community
- That size of the unit is kept small (ie not larger than 50 students), to retain an intimate/personal learning environment

7) The Program

- Literacy and numeracy be core components of the educational program
- That learning is individually focused to suit individual learning needs

- The curriculum provided to students be accredited, to allow the students to begin progress towards the attainment of TAFE Certificates, VCE, or diplomas etc.
- The features of an adult learning environment are provided in the unit ie learning that encourages self direction, ownership and participation in decision making
- The curriculum is flexible, relevant, practical and targeted at needs, including scope for various learning styles
- The program offers outdoor education, work experience, vocational and pre vocational training, personal and social development
- The unit offers a holistic multidisciplinary approach to the education/welfare of the young person
- The curriculum has a focus on personal responsibility and personal development, which will foster both individual and group success

8) Entry/referral

- There is *early* identification and assessment of students skills, learning problems, learning needs and pathways
- Entry is also available to those students who have left educational institutions for extended periods
- Student's welfare and educational needs are identified and case managed
- Exits, entries and re integration back to mainstream are well planned and managed

9) Networks

- The unit is appropriate, relevant and involved with it's local and wider community
- There is support and ownership by local education providers, local business and the student population
- There is ongoing networking and collaboration with other alternative education providers, government funding bodies and other education providers
- Where appropriate parents and carers are involved in many aspects of the school
- There is close exploration and discussion with those already established alternative education providers whose models are most relevant to the direction of the new unit
- The unit is a well integrated with other schools and the wider community so that they can respond appropriately and expediently to those young people deemed 'at risk'

(See Appendices, 16, 17,18 for checklists of ideas on 'How to set up an alternative site' from Mick Butler, Chuck Chamberlain and M. Middleton)

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACER	Australian Council for Education and Research
AEU	Australian Education Union
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CGEA	Certificate of General Education for Adults
CIRC	Children in Residential Care
CSF	Curriculum and Standards Framework
CWL	Certificate of Workplace Learning
DEET	Department of Education, Employment and Training
DHS	Department of Human Services
KLA	Key Learning Areas
PENG	Public Education. The Next Generation
PET	Planning for Education and Training
SFYS	School Focused Youth Service
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VET	Vocational education and Training

APPENDIX 1

Victorian Retention Rates (ABS 1999)

Government and non-government Schools

Year level	Female	male	Total	Number of students leaving between year levels
Year 7	29968	31622	61630	
Year 8	30006	31159	61365	(-265)
Year 9	30275	30930	61205	(-160)
Year 10	29509	29651	59160	(-2045)
Year 11	27980	26428	54408	(-4752)
Year 12	25055	21110	46165	(-8243)
Total who leave between year 7 and 12				(-15465)

* Includes government and non-government schools and those in alternative sites, interstate entries and exits.

APPENDIX 2

STAGED RESPONSE TO STUDENTS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES

(Victorian Education Department, 1998, section 3 appendix 3)

Stage one

Concern raised that students may be having difficulties in one or a number of areas.
Identification that the student has special needs. Collection of information about the students educational needs, taking action to meet these needs within the regular classroom and monitoring and reviewing the students progress.

Action

Year level Co ordinator contacts parents to discuss, document and implement strategies to assist the student developing appropriate timelines. Co ordinator notified. Strategies may include taped texts, diary communication, peer tutoring, co operative work groups and offering the student a range of ways of completing a task.

Stage two

Result of stage one review or decision is made that intensive action is necessary:

- Student support group established and support available from within the school provided.

Goals developed for the student. Checklist developed for teachers to assist in the program planning and implementation. Examine /further develop programs available at the school level that will be implemented with the student. Timelines and review mechanisms for the program established. The Co ordinator is in close contact with class teachers, parents and student.

Stage three

Decision at stage two review, or decision is made that school has need of expertise not available within current resources.

- Programs developed by student support group implemented. This may include student support staff and local agencies.

Clear step by step management program developed with built in positive reinforcement and logical consequences. Program and approach as far as possible developed with the student's input. Clear timelines for review developed.

Stage four

- Examination of the schools total provision for students experiencing difficulties to determine gaps and how they may be filled.

Implementation of a school program that provides additional support to students experiencing difficulties ie 'Stepping Out'. May include referring the student to an alternative program.

Stages five, six and seven refer to students with disabilities and/or impairments.

APPENDIX 3

EXPLORING CURRICULUM OPTIONS

(Kellmayer 1995, 'Bloom's B. Taxonomy of Educational Objectives')

Bloom's cognitive and affective categories:

Cognitive Domain

- 1) Knowledge
 - 1.1 Knowledge of specifics
 - 1.2 Knowledge and ways of dealing with specifics
 - 1.3 Knowledge of universals and abstractions in a field
- 2) Comprehension
 - 2.1 Translation
 - 2.2 Interpretation
 - 2.3 Extrapolation
- 3) Application
- 4) Analysis
 - 4.1 Analysis of elements
 - 4.2 Analysis of relationships
 - 4.3 Analysis of Organisational principles
- 5) Synthesis
 - 5.1 Production of unique communication
 - 5.2 Production of a plan or proposed set of operations
 - 5.3 Derivation of a set of abstract relations
- 6) Evaluation
 - 6.1 Judgement in terms of internal evidence
 - 6.2 Judgement in terms of external criteria

Affective Domain

- 1) Receiving (attending)
 - 1.1 Awareness
 - 1.2 Willingness to receive
 - 1.3 Controlled or selective attention
- 2) Responding
 - 2.1 Acquiescence in responding
 - 2.3 Willingness to respond
 - 2.4 Satisfaction to respond
- 3) Valuing
 - 3.1 Acceptance of a value
 - 3.2 Preference for a value
 - 3.3 Commitment
- 4) Organisation
 - 4.1 Conceptualisation of a value
 - 4.2 Organisation of a value
- 5) Characterisation by a value or value complex
 - 5.1 Generalised set
 - 5.2 Characterisation

APPENDIX 4

SCRIVEN'S KEY EVALUATION CHECKLIST

(In summary and taken from Kellmayer, 1995, p123-133)

1. Description: What is to be evaluated? Does it have components? The description may be divided into nature and operation, the function, the delivery system, the support system.
2. Client: Who is commissioning the evaluation.
3. Background and Context: Includes identification of stakeholders, function and nature of program, believed performance, expectations of the evaluation, desired type of evaluation, reporting systems, organisation charts, history of project and prior evaluations.
4. Resources: Sometimes called the 'strengths assessment'. They include money, expertise, past experience, technology and flexibility considerations.
5. Consumers: Who is using or receiving the effects of the program?
6. Values: Sometimes called the needs assessment. Of the impacted and potentially impacted populations; the defined goals of the program when a goal based evaluation is undertaken.
7. Process: What constraints and values apply to and what conclusions can we draw about the normal operation of the program (as opposed to its effects or outcomes)? In particular; legal, ethical, political, managerial, aesthetical, hedonic, scientific constraints. With this checkpoint we begin to draw evaluative conclusions.
8. Outcomes: What effects (long term or concurrent) are produced by the program (intended or unintended)? A matrix of effects is useful to get one started on the search; population affected x type of affect (cognitive/affective/psychomotor/health/social/environmental) x size of each x time of onset (immediate/ end of 'treatment'/later) x duration x each component.
9. Generalisability: To other people, places, times and versions.
10. Costs: Including dollar, psychological, personnel, time, initial, recurrent, direct, indirect, immediate, delayed and discounted.
11. Comparisons: With alternative options - recognised and unrecognised.
12. Significance: A synthesis of all the above.
13. Recommendations: May or may not be requested.
14. Report. Includes length, format, medium and so forth.
15. Meta-evaluation: An evaluation of the evaluation before dissemination.

APPENDIX 5

LIST OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROVIDERS INTERVIEWED FOR THIS REPORT

These sites were selected for interviews because they represent a cross section of generalist, full time programs available in Victoria for those young people considered to be 'at risk'.

Name of School	Contact person and title	Address
Collingwood Alternative School	Principal: Chris Astley	162 Wellington Street Collingwood 3066
Berry Street School	Co ordinator: Sue Molnar	Yan Yen Road Diamond Creek 3089
Sherbrooke Community School	Principal: Bob Shepherd	311 Mount Dandenong Road Sassafrass 3787
The Sunshine Annexe 'Oasis'	Co ordinator: Martin Phillips	Sunshine Secondary College Graham Street Sunshine 3020
Heidelberg Teaching Unit	Co ordinator: Mick Butler	Reservoir District Secondary College Plenty Road Reservoir 3403
Barkers Creek Annexe	Co ordinator: Sandy McCrumb	Castlemaine Secondary College Barkers Creek road Castlemaine 3450
GAP Program	Director: Brother Doug Walsh	M.E.W.S. Centre 3 Wood Street Fitzroy 3065
Baltara Integration Unit	Principal: Denise Clarke	51 Woolhouse Street Northcote 3070
Coburg Teaching Unit	Co ordinator: Sam Lambraia	Alva Grove Coburg 3058
Kensington Community School	Principal: Stewart Andrews	405 Racecourse Road Kensington 3031
Number One	Co ordinator: Terry Cunliffe	1 Gleadell Street Richmond 3121
Sydney Road Community School	Principal: Lyn Scott	350 Sydney Road Brunswick 3056
The Island	Co ordinator: Anne Broadribb	186 Quens Parade North Fitzroy 3068
St Augustine's Education and Training	Principal: Brother Peters	27-23 Oxford Street Whittington 3219
Lynall Hall	Principal: Alex Walker	8 Gleadell Street Richmond 3121

APPENDIX 7

AEU's Working Party's draft guidelines for setting up a Secondary Teaching Unit Provided by Mike Butler for the AEU October 1999

The AEU Welfare Teachers/Teaching Unit Working Party believes that a Secondary Teaching unit needs to be set up in the following way if it is to have long term success;

1.Staffing:

Staff need to be chosen through an interview, advertisement process and chosen on their ability to fulfil the aims and objectives of the unit.

Staff need to be permanent members of the teaching service and they need to be on permanent teacher payroll, not dependent on salaries to be paid from contributions, donations etc.

The appropriate ratio is 4 staff to 8-12 students.

2.Location:

The unit should be located so as to provide easy public transport access for students.

3.Host School:

Staff in STU should be attached to a host school for administrative, accountability and financial purposes. The unit may be sited at the host school.

4.Professional:

Each teaching unit should have 4 staff and one leadership position. The Co ordinator of the Unit is directly responsible to the host school Principal and then to a management committee/school council and through this to the Regional Director/Manager of his/her delegated representative.

5.Students:

Students should be referred by Secondary schools using the unit's referral process and documents. Units are seen as a resource to schools.

6. Aim:

The aim of the teaching unit is to work with small groups of students to help them develop academic/behavioural options to better allow them to access mainstream education. The key aim is to help students develop options and re enter the mainstream with a chance of success.

7. Physical:

The unit requires appropriate furniture, capital equipment-fax, phone, photocopier, answer machine, computer, books, writing materials, art resources, home economic facilities-fridge, stove microwave. Also the physical setting should be large enough to deal with adolescent groups of 8-12 students with 4 staff. Appropriate carpeting floor coverings and window furniture. The unit needs to be cleaned on a high usage basis.

8.Finance:

Each unit should be funded centrally through the appropriate region with funds channelled through the host school. Each unit should have a discreet global budget administered through the Bursar of the Host school. The global budget includes staff salaries, cleaning costs administrative costs, educational resources, professional development costs, tax superannuation etc.

9.Accountability:

The unit should provide every student their family and their host school a written report at the conclusion of their participation in the program. This report should focus on the reasons for the initial referral, the progress made and recommendations for success at school or in other settings. The Unit Coordinator should provide both the host school Principal/school council/management committee and the regional manager with an annual report outlining:

- student referrals
- participating schools
- outcomes for students
- financial situation at years end
- program development
- professional development program
- involvement with outside agencies
- areas of concern
- areas of focus for the next year for students and staff

10. The Program:

The STU operate an educational program that is feasible and adaptable to serve the needs of the students referred. Programs are short term and generally range from between 10-12 weeks. Intakes can be organised on a group basis or organised on a staggered intake basis.

Appendix 8

QUESTIONS FOR THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING AND THE MINISTER OF POST COMPULSORY EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT.

What is the Minister of Education, Employment and Training/Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment's view of alternative programs for at risk young people?

What is the current policy on alternative education?

What is the future policy direction for alternative education?

Where does alternative education for 'at risk' young people sit in relation to Government policy on health, welfare, youth and education issues?

What are the general funding and administration arrangements for alternative education?

What are the management arrangements for alternative education?
(ie with respect to the hierarchy)

How does the Department of Education, Employment and Training/Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment evaluate alternative education programs?

What are the outcomes the State Department of Education, Employment and Training/Post Compulsory, Education, Training and Employment want alternative education programs to achieve?

What problems/issues or concerns does the Department of Education, Employment and Training/Compulsory Education, Training and Employment have about alternative programs for 'at risk' young people?

Further comments

APPENDIX 10

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROVIDERS

1) School context

Name of school:

Address of school:

Name of interviewee and position in the school:
(ie teacher /Co ordinator/Principal)

Contact phone number:

Local environment (ie rural, urban, inner urban outer urban):

Year school opened:

Program aims or objective:

Auspice or host school:

Cost of entry:

2) Staffing arrangements

Number of full time staff

Number of part time or sessional staff:

Teachers per classroom/per session(normal arrangements):

Does staff have opportunities for professional development and supervision? Is this considered worthwhile/important?

3) Student population

Describe your target population:
(with reference to the following)

*Age range

*Gender ratio

*Ethnic mix

How many students are currently enrolled?

What is full capacity?

What are the most important issues for students (ie 'affect' and academic)?

Describe student/teacher relationships

4) Funding arrangements

Who funds your school?

Funding amounts per annum (breakdown if possible):

Amount per student if known:

5) Management hierarchy

Describe the management hierarchy within the school:

Describe the management hierarchy external to the school:
(ie with reference to parents, funding bodies and community roles)

5) Philosophy of education setting

What are the key philosophical/ideological beliefs of the school?

6) The program

Maximum or minimum lengths of stay:

Describe the referral process:

Will you enrol young people from anywhere in Melbourne?

How would you best describe the curriculum?

What are you hoping to achieve in the curriculum?

What subjects do you offer (usually)?

Is the emphasis academic/ vocational/behavioural/all/other

Further comments if necessary.

Community links

How does your program link its operations to other related community programs?

Do you have in house community service programs ie homeless programs, counselling etc?
If yes what are they?

Do you encourage parental involvement in the school?

7) Evaluation mechanisms

How do you evaluate what you do?
(ie what specific tools, indicators, outcomes or mechanisms do you use)

How does your funding body evaluate your success?

What do you think is the key to success in your program?

Do you have any suggestions about evaluation for these types of programs?

8) The future

If you could change anything about the program, what would it be?

If you were given more resources what would you use them for?

What do you see as the most pressing problems for alternative education in your school and generally?

What suggestions or advice would you offer to those, setting up a new alternative educational setting?

Any suggestions or further comments?

9) Written materials

Collect brochures/AGM reports /evaluation reports etc

APPENDIX 11

DIRECTORY OF ALTERNATIVE OFF SITE PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS CONSIDERED 'AT RISK' IN MELBOURNE

Northern

Heidelberg Teaching Unit

Central Teaching Unit

Lynall Hall

Collingwood Alternative

The Island

Number One

Baltara Integration Unit

Rudolph Steiner

Montessori Plenty Valley

Berry Street

The GAP

Olympic Village Social Integration Unit

Northland Secondary College

Austin Hospital School

Southern

Frankston Teaching Unit

St Kilda Community School

Ardoch Foundation

Albert Road Clinic School

Chelsea Adjustment Centre

Seaford Special Assistance Centre

Doveton Social Adjustment Centre

Myuna Farm Teaching Unit

Greenslopes Special Assistance

Burremah

Eastern

Heathmont Teaching Unit

Croydon Community School

Sherbrooke Community school

Berengarra

Doncaster Social Adjustment Centre

Manchester Social Adjustment Centre

Suburb

Heidelberg

Richmond (moving to Broadmeadows)

Richmond

Collingwood

North Fitzroy

Richmond

Northcote

Abbotsford

Diamond Creek

Diamond Creek (currently Eltham)

Fitzroy

West Heidelberg

West Heidelberg

Heidelberg

Frankston

St Kilda

St Kilda

South Melbourne

Chelsea

Seaford

Doveton

Doveton

Dandenong

Doveton

Heathmont

Croydon

Sherbrooke

Glen Waverley

Doncaster

Mooroolbark

Forest Hill Special Assistance Unit	Burwood East
Gladesville Special Assistance Unit	Kilsyth
Woori Yallock	Mooroolbark

Western

Sunshine Teaching Unit	Sunshine
Coburg Teaching Unit	Coburg
Kensington Community School	Kensington
Sydney Road Community School	Brunswick
Werribee River Supportive Education	Werribee
Sunshine Community Annexe, 'Oasis'	Sunshine
Footscray Access for Young Migrants	Footscray
Operation New Start	Williamstown
Travencore	Flemington
Deer Park Special Assistance Unit	Deer Park
Royal Children's Hospital	Parkville

APPENDIX 12

Sherbrooke Community School's beliefs about education

(Taken from Sherbrooke community school charter 1998-2000)

- School should be a happy place.
- Education should be accessible and rewarding for all students at all stages.
- Pastoral care is integral to the development of the whole person and is important for all students.
- Education is a shared responsibility between the home and the school.
- Students of all ages are capable of taking a responsible role in their school.
- Positive results are obtained for all students when mixed ages work together.
- Students must develop personal goals, make decisions about their own education and be given time to reflect on their decisions.
- Both students and teachers should make assessment of progress. It should be continuous, descriptive, goal based and non -competitive.
- Education should be concerned with practical life skills, current issues and knowledge and it should prepare students for future options (and lifelong learning).
- Students should be able to develop a personal view of their society and their place in that society.
- Students experience should be based on co operative group endeavour in which every person is expected to participate and is respected for their unique contribution.
- Education/learning does not just occur within the confines of the school.
- The school is open and welcoming to parents and works toward involving the wider community in it's school programs.

APPENDIX 13

Principles of Sydney Road Community School

A. The school will be small and will interpret Department of Education policy in order to serve the needs of students from the local community.

Interpretation: This principle insists that the school be small and that although the DoE makes policy and issues instructions to schools, this school should take into account the needs of students from the local community at the same time as carrying out government instructions.

B. The organisation and curriculum of the school will be inclusive of social class and cultural heritage, will allow the challenging of social stereotypes and will strive to provide for the integration of people with disabilities.

Interpretation: This principle says that the school should not work so that any group is disadvantaged. (Groups, which have been disadvantaged in the past, include amongst others, females, working class people and people from non-English speaking backgrounds.)

C. The school will provide a broad general education, which will allow all students to have access to and success in, intellectually challenging and worthwhile curriculum.

Interpretation: This principle says that education in the school should not be too specialised (because people need to know about a range of subjects). One implication of this would be that the school believes that a common curriculum is desirable. The principle goes on to say that school should be organised so that everyone has the opportunity to study worthwhile things and be successful at it. This is in opposition to the idea that only some people are 'good at school' and the others should not be there. This principle will require assessment methods, which allow these things to happen.

D. Learning and school organisation will be collaborative endeavours involving all participants.

Interpretation: This principle says that all those involved in the school should have a part in deciding upon the directions taken within the school in teaching, learning and administration.

E. The school will foster self-respect and respect for other people.

Interpretation: This principle is about everyone treating other people and themselves as valuable people.

F. The school will provide an environment which is safe, caring and conducive to study.

Interpretation: This principle says that the physical environment should be safe for all the people who come into the school and that everyone should be trying to 'look after' or 'take care' of everyone else. It goes on to imply that a primary reason for being at school is to study and learn things.

APPENDIX 14

Number One's School Values, Mission, Responsibilities and Rights.

(Taken from Number One's handbook 2000)

The Values of Number One:

- Learning
- Independence
- Respect for people
- Community involvement

Mission:

- The provision of high quality education for all students to ensure they reach their maximum level of achievement both academically and socially.

Responsibilities:

- To be honest and truthful in all matters
- To cooperate with all members of our school community
- To do our best at all times
- To seek help when we need it
- To be fair in our dealing with others
- To be reliable
- To be an active member of the school community

No one can enjoy rights without due responsibility. One person's right to learn, to ask a question, or be treated with respect is enjoyed only when other members of the school community are behaving responsibly and fairly. We need to teach, encourage and support responsible behaviour as a means of enjoying our rights.

Rights:

All Members of the school community have the right to:

- Feel and be safe at all times at school
- Learn and work without unwanted interruption.
- Be respected
- Be heard

APPENDIX 15

Types of Programs on offer at Collingwood Alternative

(Taken from Collingwood Alternative's Handout, 'Information for students, parents and guardians, 2000).

A) Vocational Education and Training (VET):

Schools can now choose to offer units of study (called modules) that are recognised by the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions. These modules can count towards VCE units and TAFE courses:

B) Planning for Employment and Training (PET)

Collingwood Alternative School now offers a VET program for students who are ready to prepare themselves for training and/or employment. The VET program we are offering is Certificate 1 in Planning for Employment and Training (PET) which is a course made up of 3 modules.

1. Personal effectiveness
2. Orientation to learning
3. Orientation to work

The PET course is designed to suit students who choose an 'alternative' school setting and who need a stepping stone into training courses, work or VCE studies.

The PET course **aims** to:

- Build self esteem and confidence
- Help students to set own goals
- Develop study skills and responsibility for learning
- Help students work effectively in a group
- Develop organisational skills
- Develop skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, reflective and critical thinking.
- Develop skills in self assessment

C). Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL acknowledges the full range of an individuals skills and knowledge, irrespective of how this knowledge has been acquired. This includes skills gained through school studies, work experience, employment and other life experiences.

CAS will recognise this prior learning and compare it with the skills to be developed in the course. If a student believes they have already achieved some or all of these skills they can apply for RPL. The student will be given the full curriculum so they can check to see what skills they already have. They can then apply for RPL by filling out an application from the school and supplying any supporting evidence.

The student will be interviewed and given a test in the form of a practical demonstration, a verbal or written test, or any other appropriate method.

If the application and test is successful, credit will be given for the relevant skills or whole modules.

Applicants may appeal against a decision.

APPENDIX 16

MICK BUTLER'S DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR SETTING UP A SECONDARY TEACHING UNIT

(Checklist provided by Mike Butler Heidelberg Teaching Unit October 2000)

1. Clarity

- What is the purpose of the setting?
- Who is it for?
- How long will students stay?
- Who doesn't it work with?

2. Procedures

- What sort of documentation will it require referrals, reports etc?
- What is the relationship to students and host school Principal?
- Principals responsibility and relationship
- Follow up/review/assessment of program
- Chain of command

3. Program

- Focus- academic, behavioural, social or mixture?

4. Resources

- Office equipment
- Overheads
- Budgeting
- Transport for kids

5. Staff

- Number of teachers to students
- Types of people/personalities
- Expertise/experience
- Professional development
- Career path

APPENDIX 17

‘How to set up an alternative School’

(Middleton Chapter 8: 163)

- 1) Using the experience of others ie making contact with existing alternative schools
“It is important to realise that there are no blue prints, for each environment is different and each set of needs unique”
- 2) Money; a basic hurdle. Accurate sources of up to date information about sources of assistance are not always easy to obtain. Consider a minimum level of funding per student. Include salaries, rental of buildings, electricity, furniture, equipment and other miscellaneous.
- 3) Legal requirements: remember to adhere to fire, health, and education authorities and the local council by laws.
- 4) Accommodation: A house may be appropriate, but remember legal requirements with renovations ie height of ceilings, number of toilets, door fastenings, fire safety equipment etc.
- 5) Timing is all important. Remember to organise buildings, staffing etc before students arrive.
- 6) Traps: be aware of internal arguments with parents, school personnel and those organising the finances.
 - organisation of volunteers
 - secondary school students require more facilities
 - optimum size
 - student freedom versus stability and security
- 7) Within the system:
 - timetabling
 - school systems and routines that involve community activity
 - learner as active participant
 - The school organisational framework must be adjusted so that its program encourage cultural, educational and innovation.
 - The school must be adaptive, ie continual adjustment to meet changing needs.

APPENDIX 18

‘Don’t tell us it can’t be done! Alternative classrooms at home and abroad’, Chuck Chamberlain, 1994.

SOME QUESTIONS WORTH THINKING ABOUT?

- What areas of growth should be primarily the responsibility of school, community agencies or family?
- How much time at school, home and community?
- How much theory text based versus real life context?
- What balance between teacher decision, student decisions and governance?
- What priority on practical skills, daily living or social values and the arts?
- What physical environments are most appropriate for school learning?
- Curriculum knowledge versus cognitive development?
- Shared teacher student responsibly versus teacher responsibility?
- Can teachers trust children to begin making responsible decisions about classroom goals, rules and learning?
- How do you empower students?
- What processes can you use to involve students in self reflection, self evaluation and peer evaluation?
- How do you deal with the ‘affect’ of a student as well as the academic?
- How can you promote and encourage where appropriate the home and school partnership?
- What traits do teachers want to nurture in the classroom?
- Curriculums must be flexible and creative how do you know you have the right mix? What is the right mix?

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